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"THE IMAGE OF LOVE IN CLAY."

BY MARY KYLE DALLAS

The image of Love in clay
Stood once on a pedestal there;
I flung them away to-day.
The shrine of that shrine fair.

For the image of Love in clay
Is tarnish'd when it once has been shattered;
Why should the fond delay
To be rid of a thing so tattered?

"Go," said I, "there are treasures
Of richer, purer ore,
Solid, substantial pleasures,
To have and to hold.

Purer and richer than any,
You have had your last day!
To yearn can never be mine,
For the image of Love in clay."

MARK HEBER'S LUCK;

OR,

Life on the Plains.

By LEON LEWIS,

AUTHOR OF "THE BOY RANCHMAN," "RED KNIFE," "THE BROKEN HORN," "EDDY'S SEARCH," "THE OLD FOUR SEAS," ETC., ETC.

CHAPTER III.

JOURNEYING ON THE PLAINS.

Gay Heber had scarcely made the alarming discovery of the approach of the savages, when the Executive's bugle rang out a second and yet more exciting blast, that echoed far and wide over the prairie. Then, as if that had not yet died out when Mark Heber's shrill boyish voice was heard, calling to Gay to return to the camp.

Even before the sound of Mark's voice reached her ears, Gay was in full flight back to cover, her small, slender figure now seeming to skim over the ground. "Oh, Mark, Mark!" in some low vexed tone, she fled with the swiftness of the startled antelope, every nerve in her delicate frame stretched to its utmost tension, her big brown eyes fixed upon the wagons, into which the women and children were already hurrying, concealing themselves behind boxes and barrels.

Gay gained the camp and the Heber wagon first, and, springing to the ground, she, as she and any one accustomed among horses and ponies, the little dusky cropped head below the top of her small rude bed, and then he hurried back to assist the men in the defense of the camp. Gay's quick ear caught the sound of the rattle of "Blue Jake" at a gallop, and she actually were all driven into the inclosure thus formed.

The men had all armed themselves hastily, each with rifles and revolvers, which were already loaded and in readiness for use.

Conductor Landford was the commander, and he had stationed himself at the point of the semi-circle of wagons, and was now waiting, as in a lady's parlor—and indeed far more so. He was skilled in Indian warfare, and was a scout of considerable note.

He stood upon a wagon box, his field glass in his hand, with one eye upon the advancing Indians, and the other upon his own immediate troop.

"There are twenty savages," he announced, his chief voice cutting the air like a bullet, "and there are fifteen of us, counting in Whittaman's boy. Amory's two men, Hopkins and the two sons each of Brown and Arnold, and young Mark Heber. Now, my boys, you are under arrestation, and we shall expect you to behave like men. Don't worry, you are fighting for your homes and dearest. Now is what may you are ready?"

The lads, whose ages ranged from sixteen to twenty-one, responded by a lighter grip on their rifles, and an expression of grim determination on every face.

Conductor Landford assigned to the young guard their positions. "You be shooted!" he said to Mark Heber, "and I be shooted!"

The men rushed to one of the wagons and dragged out a small swivel bold-piece, which the mounted upon an easily mobile carriage. This was placed in position, and Whittaman loaded it, and manned it himself.

All these preparations had taken but a few minutes, and the savages were now within a mile of the camp. The women and children were huddled in the wagons; the cattle were gathered within the inclosure, and secured, by their noisy air, to be aware that danger was near.

By this time the savages were within a mile of the camp, and still coming onward like a cloud of dust.

"They will attack us in front," said the guide. "They are in war paint, and are well mounted. The river is at our backs, and with a dozen extra men to us, as it prevents the approach of the red-skins from that direction. When I give the word, fire!"

The men, with eyes fixed upon the object, laying aside their field glasses, and grasping their rifles, waited.

Gay, Gay, Mark Heber, still I give the order!" he said, his keen eyes not swerving from the enemy. "I shall give them a gentle hint first from the rifles. The first to shoot—the first shot."

Every rifle was brought into position.

The Indians came nearer and nearer, and with every step the fierce look of the fight grew more plain to his boldness and to the eye. They were within a quarter of a mile of the camp, Landford still, clear-voiced as ever over the positions commanding them to stop.

If they did not comprehend his words, they assuredly did the gesture accompanying them, for the line of savages halted once and did so, then they rode on their horses and did so.

Now, boys, give them a hint that we are not feeding," said the guide again.

Mark Heber and his young comrades fired a volley.

Their shots did no special damage to the enemy, for it is hard to aim fight young hands are not to be trusted, and young hearts throb wildly, but they succeeded in their object, and they succeeded in putting among themselves.

The next moment a shower of bullets came hurtling toward the defenders of the camp.

The emigrants sprang and all stood their ground. There was no onward blood in all that band of brave men. Mark Heber's pulses grew feverish, his hand-shook unnatural, and his breath fast stern and rigid his expression was of grim determination. Cool, very cool, quite, he seemed in that moment to develop new character and energy.

Landford swept a glance around him. No one was losing.

The Indians, after a little deliberation among themselves, spread out in the shape of a half circle, and resumed their approach, with the evident intention of attacking the camp on three sides.

"Fire!" again cried Landford. "Give it to them, Whittaman!"

"Whittaman will give it to them." One touch of his sturdy finger, and the little field-piece belched forth a very rain of death, mowing down those nearest with terrible havoc, and riders rolling over and over in horrible death throes.

The remaining savages again came on a halt, but only for an instant, with a howl of vengeance, they came on again to the onslaught, firing as they came, and looking like incarnate fiends.

"All together!" cried the guide.

Whittaman was loading the piece again, as the sweat running from his hot and begrimed face, when a shout from Mark Heber, in a voice free from fear, but almost savage, fell before the deadly rain.

It was immediately seized upon the survivors. In the midst of it, Whittaman gently touched all his fellow-men.

This ended the conflict. The savages with their dead and dying, and the wounded, commenced their flight, and were held, and finally slain away their wounded. One horse was shot dead from the camp, while two had a painful savage hanging by a stirrup.

As the distance of half a mile from the camp, the Indians paused for a moment to rest and consult. Then they came on for the last and concerted attack.

"So we be ready," said Landford, waving his hand and signaling forward upon his rifle. "Are you hurt?"

Mark Heber passed his shoulder, and Arnold's eldest son had a flesh wound in his arm, but neither of them had ceased to fight.

The cattle and live stock were found to be secured, the men-ring completed, and protected them from the arrows and bullets of the enemy.

But the occupants of the wagons! How had they fared?

Mark was on the point of hurrying to his mother's wagon, when Gay appeared, and seeing the boyish figure of his friend, and a pair of very bright brown eyes looking out upon the retreating Indians, and then settled upon Mark with an expression of unutterable joy.

"Are you safe, Mark?" she cried, coming toward her.

"Yes, but I almost smothered," answered Gay. "I am not all right, are you not, Mark? I am so glad you are safe. Oh, Mark, I am so glad you are safe. Oh, Mark, I am so glad you are safe. Oh, Mark,

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hind it with a rose, came the first wagon of the other train, and stringing behind this the other "prairie-schooners."

The level of the plains was broken by the sterile hilling parallel with it on the northern south, running from a half-mile to three miles, covering meagre as the travellers advanced, and breaking up into cones and peaks, separated by deep and steep ravines. The river was studded with islands, some shaded by trees and grass, others bare as the sand of the bed and bottled refresh. And wished that Mark would choose his bottle more quickly.

On leaving Kearney City, they entered upon the Indian country. The river bubble at any time to an attack by savages, and the utmost care and vigilance were required and exerted. Conductor Landford was a man of few words usually, and very quiet, but his eyes were upon all parts of the train, and every man in it, even while he kept his head somewhere against the approach of Indians.

Each wagon had talked with every man in the new portion of the train, and had formed an opinion of them, which, however, only confirmed what his had been stated. He felt confident that he could rely upon ten men of the whole company, and, in case of an attack or trouble, the five "doubtful" ones would side with the reliables.

Twenty-four to ten! Not bad odds, if it came to a fight with all sides. There would be no conflict with such a discrepancy. The villains like the old numbers on their side. We shall have no trouble, but I must be ready for an up guard."

So reasoning that night, Landford appointed three men to remain on guard, and these men he was careful to pick out from those he knew to be reliable.

During the hours of the desperadoes, two of whom rode horseback. Very soon after they had left the train, Landford counted the horses with their heavy burdens. They indulged in drink pretty freely too, and no one cared to notice them.

At the noon halt an incident occurred which aroused the first unpleasant feeling between the emigrants and the desperadoes.

Mark Weber had cooked for self and Mark's simple dinner as usual, and they had eaten it. He had also cooked half a dozen extra cakes for his wife and children, and carefully deposited them in the other basket, and hung from a hook under the wagon, and Mark's brother-in-law self silly, child-fashion, on the turf, and was drinking freely and deeply. The cakes and brown eyes gazed upon the distant hills which bounded the valley.

Her hat lay on the ground, with a wreath of flowers which she had gathered in the morning, were partly strained, and one of the pockets of her dress was torn. Her natural child-like half girl, half woman.

A merry snatch of song was on her lips when one of the desperadoes approached. He came up to her, and passed beside her, remarking in a low, insinuating voice:

"Hallo, monkey," he said gruffly, "I suppose you're catching a good deal of that pestilent young cub's beer and cakes? Well, you're welcome to 'em, and you won't with your brother, eh? Give us a kiss, then, my dear."

He took a long cigar from his mouth and bent his black face down to kiss her. He breath, tainted and polluted with whisky and tobacco, blew like a simoom in the girl's face.

In an instant she leaped to her feet.

"Don't you dare to touch me!" said the youth that had been offered her with a woman's dignity and a child's fear.

"How dare you?" said cried, "you brute. If you touch me, I'll call my brother."

Mark was in the act of taking his cream, and was at a little distance. No groom person was very near, but the children were close at hand. One cry from Gay would bring every man in the company to her assistance. Mark, in his thoughtlessness, would forward the emigrants, and he would step, but he had recently been imbibing a quantity of American courage in the shape of whisky, and returned to the charge with a spirit at his jaw and a dark look in his eyes that contrasted strangely to his smile.

"Why, my dear," said he, "you're not afraid of me, are you? You are other than I took you for. Will warrant me by your sister, brother has kissed them lips of your's, and I'm bound to have one—one only."

Gay recoiled a little. She was brave to her own proper, and scorned to run from the foe. But she would not even call her brother. She would fight her own battle herself.

She looked for her child, whose presence the stout Mark had brought for her at Leaven-worth, and which he had always fought her to use skilfully. In fact, she had taken daily lessons in target practice since she had come upon the train by Indians on the Little Blue, and she was not afraid of the little pistol—the weapon in her hand.

The child had not heard, and its four small dark robes were promptly presented to the eyes of Mark the respectless. He started back in unaffected horror and amazement.

Recovering himself, he would have forced a laugh, but there was a tenderness in the girl's eyes brown eyes that startled him anew.

"The little vixen!" he muttered. "She acts like a high-wayman instead of a shrinking woman. Curse her!"

He took continuing a step nearer to her, and him he began a retreat.

"I was only fooling," he observed. "I didn't mean nothing. Don't say nothing, young one. I'm off."

And he hastened to beat a retreat to his own proper quarters.

Gay's light laugh rang after him mockingly, and she called to her child, who at once would come that will-o'-the-wisp, and ran to it. I will be easy on it, that will. I'll make 'em ashamed, blest if I don't."

Gay's fear of the ruffian had not been near as great as her anger at his insult. Before he had gone, she mounted her pistol and put it in her pocket, and, picking up her hat, slowly returned to her wagon.

She was in no hurry to resume its march. The children were not yet done dinner, and Gay climbed up to the driver's seat in her own wagon. Mark proposed to ride with her on the seat with a goad.

Gay peeped out at the side of her wagon. Mark was toiling on a stout horse, near the rear of the line.

"Come up into the wagon, Mark," said the girl compassion. "I have room enough for you, and you'll be more comfortable."

Mark climbed up beside Gay, his boyish face full of tenderness and affection as he looked down upon his adopted sister.

"Well, what is it, little one?" he said, as she hesitated.

Then he noticed that man Buck, who joined on with the other train at Kearney City, was riding by the side of the wagon, his head bent well out of the side of the wagon. He's riding a horse, and wears a short blue jacket heavily faced with brass buttons.

"I've seen him and noticed him," said Mark. "Mr. Landford has a poor opinion of him. He's a Confederate of Wise Jack, the rustler. What have you to say about him, Gay?"

"He wanted to kiss me, brother, the bad fellow," said Gay composedly, "and, as you were busy, I—I—I pulled out my pistol and scared him. He thought I meant to shoot him, and went off to the rear of the train."

Mark's boyish brown grew stern, and his eyes flashed.

"The scoundrel and villain!" he exclaimed. "I'll horsewhip him for that. How dared he—"

"Don't get into trouble on my account, dear Mark!" exclaimed Gay, in alarm. "He's a bad man, and he might kill you. He didn't kiss me, and I don't want him to. I'm sure I'm glad he has kept sensible on again. Don't speak to him, Mark, please don't."

But Mark would not promise. The strong ness on his brows deepened as he continued to regard the innocent child-like face, radiant with purity and spirit.

"How dared the ruffian think of kissing you?" he ejaculated. "If he so much as looks at you again, I'll teach him manners with a horse-whip on his back. Gay, you're a long way on in life, child, to want such a cattle like approaching you again, and then I'll tan his jacket for him."

Gay laughed in sudden relief.

"Then he lacked will go untanned," she said. "For he won't dare come near me again. He would as soon touch a rattle as to touch me."

The afternoon passed without particular incident, beyond the meeting of a party of Sioux Indians.

About sunset, when the train was forming a halt for the night, the keen eye of the guide noted in the distance a solitary horseman, going slowly in the same direction as the train, but somewhat to its advance. Using his field glass, Landford saw that the horseman was an Indian, as he thought, and spurred but a single traveller attired in the usual garb of the Sioux warriors.

The traveller, looking back, saw the advancing train, the white canvas wagon roofs glittering in the sun, and he paused a few moments, and then putting spurs to his horse, turned and came swiftly toward the train.

Before he had reached it, Landford had commanded a halt. When the men in the group of emigrants were waiting in front of the train for the stranger.

He roused in his horse strangely, and Landford has but politely to Landford, whose prominent position he had noticed, and to the group whose air of command proclaimed him the conductor of the train.

The horseman was tall and athletic, with a good figure and a round head, which rested not upon a big red throat. He had the chest and arms of a Hercules, and his face was red and black, with a heavy beard from the eyes downward and a heavy mustache. His hair fell from his mouth and fell in a tangled mass upon his breast.

"Are you the conductor of this train, sir?" demanded the horseman, addressing Landford. "I am a bearer of dispatches from Fort Kearney to Fort Sedgwick, and am feeling between two detachments of the Sioux, as there are red-skins ahead, and I have a wife and child in the rear of your train during the remainder of my journey."

Landford spoke with courtesy, but with caution, and said:

"What sort have you here Fort Kearney?"

"Two days ago," was the prompt response, "I handed the same to the officer who has made poor progress since—in fact, much which bound for town. I have been trying to overtake the train with which I purposed to travel."

Landford looked at the horse keenly, but certainly was lame.

"Have you your dispatches?" asked the guide.

The horseman drew from his breast pocket a small sealed packet in an official envelope, carefully addressed, and the guide found that about it to prove it other than genuine. He handed it back, and said:

"Fallon, Lieutenant Fallon," was the reply. "I have letters from him to my wife and child at Lieut. Fallon at Fort Kearney, and had once heard a description of him. The description accorded very well with the appearance of the stranger, and the fact that he knew him grew rapidly less.

"Fallon is a captain, Lieutenant," he said apologetically. "They are all the rage in the army just on the plains."

"Just so," said the officer, and the Lieutenant, showing a sudden gleam of white teeth in unpleasant contrast to his black face. "In other circumstances, if you care to look at them, I have a letter from Fallon to my wife announcing his promotion."

Landford looked long leathern pocket-book, and subjected the document to scrutiny. Then Landford, who read it carefully, and knew it to be genuine, and that the description of the bearer addressed to "Lieut Fallon, Fort Kearney, Nebraska," and also a letter from the commander of Fort Kearney to the commander of Fort Sedgwick announcing the fact that Lieutenant Fallon was promoted to a captaincy, little too rank and careless of danger.

Landford's suspicions were not thus soothed. He bade Lieutenant Fallon welcome, and told him to dismount and join the party.

"I'll journey with you if you'll just make room on one of your wagons," he said, politely. "I'll share your watches, your fatigues, and, if need be, your dangers."

Landford had no room in his wagon, and declined to give it. He talked apart with Landford, and made inquiries concerning Mrs. Whitmans, as that the hospitable Whitmans were in the train, and also concerning the family, which offer Lieutenant Fallon accepted.

He only supper with the Whitmans, and he was in the habit of eating with various emigrants. At last he went to Landford's wagon, and the wrapping himself in a sort of Mexican poncho, threw himself upon the ground, declaring that he liked the soldier's couch above all others.

The light gloom of the night deepened, the camp fires were lighted, supper was cooked, their guns on the ground, and the emigrants began to retire. Lieutenant Fallon turned restless and tossed about, and the eyes looked keenly around him. The guard was at the further end of his beat, and the other guards being stationed at equal distances around the camp.

Fallon rolled over and over, little by little he drew nearer to the wagon, and at last he reclined on the ground at the back, his lay on the ground at the back, his lay on the ground at the back, his lay

BORN IN A CAGE.

BY MRS. M. A. KIDDER.

Born in a cage! O hapless fate
To captives such as I!
To think that down my wiry gate
The years must hurry by!
That I am doomed to sit and sing,
A lond slave, till I die.

My yellow wings are nicely furred
As any wings you see;
And red pervades my little head
In bitter mockery,
My plumage is a boon, a compliment,
It called "Dutch Jubilee."

I see afar the wooded dells,
I see the plashing rills;
I feel the cooling summer's closes
That tempt the birds to flee;
While I, a solitary bird,
Must breed, and bear my ills.

My seed is in the corner there,
My water in a cup;
But how a little wriggling worm
Could cheer me up!
Could I but see those dismal cages carried—
"Would fain my ailments cure.

Ah! there is cast a prisoner doomed.
Within a cage to die.
Nothing is rain for life and love
In some fair sylvan clime:
I'll tarry here, for that bright age,
The sweet millennium time!

BETWEEN TWO FIRES.

By MRS. SOUTHWORTH,

AUTHOR OF "THE HIDDEN HAND," "SELF-MADE," "THE SHEPHERD," ETC.

CHAPTER LXXVI.

THE GHOST SEEN BY "TATERS."

He stood with his back to the fire, and his hands behind him to carry out what, before, he had said:

How sad a single bachelor's misery!
Shunned like a leper by the fair sex, hear's destiny.

"Emma, dear, I have a letter from Uncle John, Lyttleton," said Laura gravely, going to the side of her friend.

"I hope they are all well at Lyttleton Lodge," responded Emma.

"Oh, yes, thank you; they are all quite well, but," added Laura, with a sigh, "Uncle John has written to me in some sort of haste and pay them a visit. And to leave me no excuse, he has sent his servant, Richard Lyttleton, over with another bed horse and side-saddle, to take me back with him."

"Well, I think you need not go, I hope?" said Emma, looking up from her work.

"I would not, dearest Emma, with pleasure, sigh. "And really I ought to be glad to go to see such kind friends as all my relatives there have been to me; but you see, Emma, I don't like to leave you for such a length of time, and I have to return to school."

"Then why do you go at all? Why can you not send for excuses?"

"Uncle would not refuse to go if you went to my place!" interposed Mrs. Grey.

Emma Cavendish could not reply.

"No, you would not, dearest Emma," because it would not be right to refuse."

"But my dear, to perform so long a journey on horseback! It must be over twenty miles. Let me see—it is about that distance from here to Woodlove, and it must be ten or eleven from Woodlove to Lyttleton Lodge, Emma."

"Oh, only about eight or nine. The whole journey is a delightful ride, and there is not a cross on it by the roads or highways. And if I could go as the crow flies, it is not more than six miles. Why, you know the western extremity of your land touches the western extremity of uncle's."

"So it does. And if, as you say, you could go as the crow flies, that is, straight over mountains and rivers, you could get there in two hours. As it is, it is a long, very fine ride indeed, and that is too long for a girl to be in the saddle at one time. I do not like to see you encouraged in such exercise."

"I think I can stand it," smiled Laura.

"But you shall not! If you will go, you must take the little carriage. When do you propose to start?"

"To-morrow morning."

"Well, as well as the redoubtable Mithridates back with his steeds. And send you in the little carriage with Mr. Richard Lyttleton, the faithful guardsman of your estate, with orders to remain in your service for the term of your visit, and to bring you back again, at farthest, on the third day," said Emma, perconquered.

Laura thanked her friend, but protested against any trouble being taken for her account.

But Miss Cavendish was firm, and the arrangement was made according to her plan.

In the mean time Mithridates, the head and friend of Emma's home—made a sweet cider in the kitchen, moreover some of his companions; friends still, who had been out of most and his eyes starting from his head, he persisted that the cider was the spirit of his young mistress. And it was a token of his gratitude.

O'long way from her, her, Ef I didn't hanker after them cakes and cider as you was innocated. I have never was so openly never sense this home, except when I was a little mannie."

"I don't care! I did see her spectre! So there now!" persisted Mr. Taters, balling a chunk of bread, and choking with it for a moment. "I see—and—it—is—here—at—this—moment!"

"Is that the reason you're a trying to kill yourself with that cider, eh?"

"No, but I seen her spectre!"

"Well, I don't believe a word of it. You're making of it up, on account of your having eaten too much. There, now, of you're done eatin' you'd better go look after the horses, hear's Aunt Ann Moll, seeing her guest pause in his gastronomic efforts.

But "Taters" hadn't done eating, and didn't get done until all the cakes and other kitchen table were cleared and the jug of cider emptied.

Then he stood, he gave over and went out to look after the horses.

At the same hour Laura Grey retired to her room, suffered agonies of terror and anxiety. She had not been such a night since her past life; a ghost that might have come to summon her from her present existence.

On her way down stairs to the drawing-room, she had been startled almost to faint in the middle landing by the sight of a once familiar face and form.

That sad face dressed in the old thin apparel, the same face, the same form, she recognized her, as surely as she had recognized him.

And in an instant she vanished.

She darted into her own room and locked the door, and sank breathless into the nearest chair.

And there she sat now, with beating heart and burning brain, trying for what should come next.

Up to the door was the next thing that came.

It frightened her, of course—everything frightened her now.

"Who is that?" she nervously inquired.

Only me, miss," she heard upon replying. luncheon for you. Miss Emma sends her compliments, and says you must come down!" spoke the voice of Sarah, the lady's maid.

"Love to Miss Cavendish, and ask her to excuse me. I do not want any luncheon," answered Mary Grey, after composing the door.

Then she sank back in her chair with throbbing head, and heart, and hands, and cried. She was really ill with terror, anxiety and dread. She grew so weak at last that she lay down upon her sofa.

Then came another rap at the door.

"Who is that?" she asked again faintly.

"It is I, dear," answered the voice of Emma Cavendish.

Mrs. Grey arose trembling, and opened the door.

"I was afraid that you were not well, I came to see you," said Emma kindly, as she entered the room.

"I—no, I am not quite well," faltered Mary Grey, as she retreated to the sofa and sat down, with her back purposely to the light, and her face in the shadow.

"So really look pale and ill. What is the matter, dear?"

"I—think I have taken cold. But by keeping my room for a few days I hope to be better. A cold always affects the nerves of the heart, and makes me very nervous," said Mary Grey, in explanation of the tremors for which she could not otherwise account.

Then Emma expressed sympathy and sorrow, and begged the pretended invalid to have some tea sent to her room, or some wine whey or chicken broth.

But Mary Grey refused all these offers, declaring that a cold always took her appetite away.

And again Emma expressed sympathy.

And as Miss Cavendish talked, Mary Grey grew more composed.

It was evident, she thought, that Emma as yet knew nothing of that strange encounter on the stairs.

Presently Miss Cavendish said:

"I am sorry to tell you, that we shall lose Laura Lyttleton for a few days. Her uncle, Mr. Lyttleton of Lyttleton Lodge, has sent a messenger for her. She goes to visit her relations there to-morrow morning."

"Indeed!" exclaimed Mary Grey, pricking up her ears.

"Yes, a queer genius, who signalized his entrance into the house by a scene," added Emma, smiling.

"Indeed!"

"Oh yes. Why, you might have heard the commotion in the front hall! But you say nothing of it!"

"No, dear; I have remained shut up in my room ever since breakfast, and have not stirred out of it. I suppose that is why I have not heard the least disturbance."

"That accounts for your knowing nothing about it. Well, Richard Lyttleton arrived on a conclusion, by suddenly falling down in the hall, in a fainting fit, and was carried in where he had seen the spirit of his young mistress on the saddle instead of the dear living one."

An optical illusion, of course," answered Mary Grey, in a tone that was intended to be firm, but was carefully kept in the shadow.

"Yes, dear, that is what Uncle Jack Lyttleton, who is a bit of a philosopher, and who has studied optics, and Frederick Fanshaw, of Wildwood, who married my cousin Sarah Lyttleton, and frequently his young mistress must have been in their minds when they saw her," added Laura with a sigh.

"Does any one know what was the answer of that wretched girl?" inquired Mrs. Grey, in a very low tone.

No; but I gather from the wild talk of the boy Richard, that it was a—a—a—a—a—a—a—" "What shall I say?" thought Laura.

"What shall I say?" thought Emma Cavendish, and still keeping her face in the deep shadow.

"I do not know; I heard that they went to Lyttleton Lodge, but I did not stop to hear them since. But, my dear, you are talking about your cousin, Sarah Lyttleton, as if she were already safely indicted. Now I advise you to think no more about it, but to come down with some of us to luncheon."

And then she kissed Mary Grey, begged her to ring for anything she wanted, and left her when she left the room.

Mary Grey locked the door and sank down, and drew a letter from his pocket, and began to read it.

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Laura Lyttleton, Emma Cavendish and Mary Grey were in the drawing-room. Miss Cavendish in the hall, waiting for Mrs. Grey, to whom she had given the task of supervising her to come down and see the traveller off.

But presently the messenger returned without Mrs. Grey's love and excuses, and begged that they would excuse her from coming down, as her head was very much worse, and she had taken a little sleep.

"I must go up and bid her good-bye then," said Laura, as she dismissed Sarah again, at and ran up stairs.

She found Mary Grey in a fine white merino dressing-gown, playing an interesting invalid.

She hastily kissed her, expressed her sorrow at the night and better on returning to Rise Cliffe, and then hurried down stairs and into the carriage and away.

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"Lor-lo-lor, John! How dare you ma-makes so free as skip with Laura to come to young 'oman?" exclaimed old Mrs. Lyttle, as, in her well-known fat, fussy, and yet good-natured manner, she came up and kissed her grand-daughter.

"Why, because she is a young 'oman of course, and not a child, as you call her, mother," said Uncle John tartly.

"Why, how much you have improved, child!" said Miss Molly Moss, coming up.

"Oh, ain't she though neither?" exclaimed Dicky and Billy, the twin boys, shaking her hands; the one clinging to her right, and the other to her left.

"Come now, I think you had better let Laura go up stairs and take off her bonnet and things. Dinner's all ready to go on the table, and I'm as hungry as a bear!" said Uncle John.

And Jackson, the butler, had to get and tell John Brooks to put up the pony carriage, and practical Aunt Christy, as she took and faced Laura about toward the spare bedroom that was on the first floor.

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"No, he and Charley went to Perch Point fishing yesterday, intending to stay all night at the cottage, and return to-day. I reckon they'll soon be here," said Aunt Christy.

Laura washed her face and hands, and brushed her hair, and put on a clean collar and cuffs, and declared herself ready to join the dinner party.

Even as she spoke there was the hilarious bustle of an arrival in the hall outside.

And as Laura emerged from the room, she was caught in the arms of her brother Alden.

"My darling sister, I am so delighted to see you!" said the young man, kissing her joyously.

"So am I to see you, Alden, dear. But why didn't you accept Mrs. Cavendish's invitation to come to the Easter party at Rise Cliffe?" inquired Laura.

"My dear, because I thought my duty called me here," gravely replied Alden.

"But for a day or two you might have joined us," coaxed Laura.

"No," said Alden. Then turning toward his red-headed fishing companion, he said:

"Charley, let Rosamond Charley welcome you, Laura."

And Charley Lyttleton, blushing and stammering, held out his hand, and said:

"How do you do? I am very glad to see you."

"And now come to dinner," said Aunt Kitty, opening the dining-room door.

They all went in and sat down to as fine a dinner as was ever served in Blue Cliff Hall, Gloria Mere, Mississippi, or Nowhere. Although this was laid on a rough pine table, covered with a white cloth, and served on delf ware.

And again from where the waiters were whittled and the doors were bars.

"And now," said Uncle Jacky, as soon as he had served the turtle soup around to everybody, "I have to tell me why you rascallys rode the gray mare, and why you came in a pony carriage with a shay-up pair of broke?"

"Why, you know, I am a good-for-nothing Laura Lyttleton's fay day," her uncle, Mr. Lyttleton of Lyttleton Lodge, has sent a messenger for her. She goes to visit her relations there to-morrow morning."

"Indeed!" exclaimed Mary Grey, pricking up her ears.

"Yes, a queer genius, who signalized his entrance into the house by a scene," added Emma, smiling.

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"Oh yes. Why, you might have heard the commotion in the front hall! But you say nothing of it!"

"No, dear; I have remained shut up in my room ever since breakfast, and have not stirred out of it. I suppose that is why I have not heard the least disturbance."

"That accounts for your knowing nothing about it. Well, Richard Lyttleton arrived on a conclusion, by suddenly falling down in the hall, in a fainting fit, and was carried in where he had seen the spirit of his young mistress on the saddle instead of the dear living one."

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A FLIGHT FROM RISE CLIFF.

Laura Lyttleton was received into her relatives at Lyttleton Lodge, and was just turning to go up stairs to her room, when the servant announced the news of her immediate departure to Rise Cliffe. Laura, as she had expected, was sorely opposed it, when, on the evening of the next day, Richard Lyttleton, on a fine cream horse, and a side-saddle, arrived.

The visitor was shown into the big parlor, where all the family were expecting and eagerly, were assembled, and engaged in cheerful conversation, awaiting the dinner hour.

He came in bowing, shook hands with everybody, and declared that he was sent to see Miss Laura Lyttleton home, and to mention while he was there that he was to remain in her service for the term of her visit, and to bring her back again, at farthest, on the third day," said Emma, perconquered.

Laura thanked her friend, but protested against any trouble being taken for her account.

But Miss Cavendish was firm, and the arrangement was made according to her plan.

In the mean time Mithridates, the head and friend of Emma's home—made a sweet cider in the kitchen, moreover some of his companions; friends still, who had been out of most and his eyes starting from his head, he persisted that the cider was the spirit of his young mistress. And it was a token of his gratitude.

O'long way from her, her, Ef I didn't hanker after them cakes and cider as you was innocated. I have never was so openly never sense this home, except when I was a little mannie."

"I don't care! I did see her spectre! So there now!" persisted Mr. Taters, balling a chunk of bread, and choking with it for a moment. "I see—and—it—is—here—at—this—moment!"

"Is that the reason you're a trying to kill yourself with that cider, eh?"

"No, but I seen her spectre!"

"Well, I don't believe a word of it. You're making of it up, on account of your having eaten too much. There, now, of you're done eatin' you'd better go look after the horses, hear's Aunt Moll, seeing her guest pause in his gastronomic efforts.

But "Taters" hadn't done eating, and didn't get done until all the cakes and other kitchen table were cleared and the jug of cider emptied.

Then he stood, he gave over and went out to look after the horses.

At the same hour Laura Grey retired to her room, suffered agonies of terror and anxiety. She had not been such a night since her past life; a ghost that might have come to summon her from her present existence.

On her way down stairs to the drawing-room, she had been startled almost to faint in the middle landing by the sight of a once familiar face and form.

That sad face dressed in the old thin apparel, the same face, the same form, she recognized her, as surely as she had recognized him.

And in an instant she vanished.

She darted into her own room and locked the door, and sank breathless into the nearest chair.

And there she sat now, with beating heart and burning brain, trying for what should come next.

Up to the door was the next thing that came.

It frightened her, of course—everything frightened her now.

"Who is that?" she nervously inquired.

Only me, miss," she heard upon replying. luncheon for you. Miss Emma sends her compliments, and says you must come down!" spoke the voice of Sarah, the lady's maid.

"Love to Miss Cavendish, and ask her to excuse me. I do not want any luncheon," answered Mary Grey, after composing the door.

Then she sank back in her chair with throbbing head, and heart, and hands, and cried. She was really ill with terror, anxiety and dread. She grew so weak at last that she lay down upon her sofa.

Then came another rap at the door.

"Who is that?" she asked again faintly.

"It is I, dear," answered the voice of Emma Cavendish.

Mrs. Grey arose trembling, and opened the door.

"I was afraid that you were not well, I came to see you," said Emma kindly, as she entered the room.

"I—no, I am not quite well," faltered Mary Grey, as she retreated to the sofa and sat down, with her back purposely to the light, and her face in the shadow.

"So really look pale and ill. What is the matter, dear?"

"I—think I have taken cold. But by keeping my room for a few days I hope to be better. A cold always affects the nerves of the heart, and makes me very nervous," said Mary Grey, in explanation of the tremors for which she could not otherwise account.

Then Emma expressed sympathy and sorrow, and begged the pretended invalid to have some tea sent to her room, or some wine whey or chicken broth.

But Mary Grey refused all these offers, declaring that a cold always took her appetite away.

And again Emma expressed sympathy.

And as Miss Cavendish talked, Mary Grey grew more composed.

It was evident, she thought, that Emma as yet knew nothing of that strange encounter on the stairs.

Presently Miss Cavendish said:

"I am sorry to tell you, that we shall lose Laura Lyttleton for a few day. Her uncle, Mr. Lyttleton of Lyttleton Lodge, has sent a messenger for her. She goes to visit her relations there to-morrow morning."

"Indeed!" exclaimed Mary Grey, pricking up her ears.

"Yes, a queer genius, who signalized his entrance into the house by a scene," added Emma, smiling.

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The fine horses, the glossy coats and water the horses, and then they resumed their journey and went on to Lyttleton Lodge, where they arrived just about noon.

John Lyttleton, who recently on the look-out for his niece, for as the pony carriage drove up to the door, he was out in the porch, shouting of all the little negroes in reach out of the house, threatening to have them all be caught and sent to the penitentiary for her soul, rearing his welcome.

And Laura, as she received his honest hearty greeting, felt a twinge of self-reproach in remembering with what reluctance she had come.

Uncle John took her into the house and set her down in the hall in the midst of all her luggage, which had crowded them in a narrow space.

"Lor-lo-lor, John! How dare you ma-makes so free as skip with Laura to come to young 'oman?" exclaimed old Mrs. Lyttle, as, in her well-known fat, fussy, and yet good-natured manner, she came up and kissed her grand-daughter.

"Why, because she is a young 'oman of course, and not a child, as you call her, mother," said Uncle John tartly.

"Why, how much you have improved, child!" said Miss Molly Moss, coming up.

"Oh, ain't she though neither?" exclaimed Dicky and Billy, the twin boys, shaking her hands; the one clinging to her right, and the other to her left.

"Come now, I think you had better let Laura go up stairs and take off her bonnet and things. Dinner's all ready to go on the table, and I'm as hungry as a bear!" said Uncle John.

And Jackson, the butler, had to get and tell John Brooks to put up the pony carriage, and practical Aunt Christy, as she took and faced Laura about toward the spare bedroom that was on the first floor.

Uncle wrote us that my brother was here. But, I don't see him," said Laura, as she doffed her bonnet.

"No, he and Charley went to Perch Point fishing yesterday, intending to stay all night at the cottage, and return to-day. I reckon they'll soon be here," said Aunt Christy.

Laura washed her face and hands, and brushed her hair, and put on a clean collar and cuffs, and declared herself ready to join the dinner party.

Even as she spoke there was the hilarious bustle of an arrival in the hall outside.

And as Laura emerged from the room, she was caught in the arms of her brother Alden.

"My darling sister, I am so delighted to see you!" said the young man, kissing her joyously.

"So am I to see you

THE NEW YORK LEDGER

ROBERT BONNER, EDITOR AND PROPRIETOR.

NEW YORK, SATURDAY, MARCH 2, 1872.

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ROBERT BONNER, Publisher,
Corner of William and Spruce sts., New York.

They Can Never Have but One Mother.

"Children can never have but one mother. Enough angels protect them, and gather them under their golden wings, they can never have but one mother."

So spoke an eloquent clergyman, to whom we listened many years ago. His words are true. They were true when they were spoken; they stated a truth which had always existed, and which will always continue to exist. It is founded in the unchanging laws of human being. The child which loses its mother can have a host which, in its love, will not equal a mother.

We do not mean to disparage the consolations and earnest efforts of many a second wife to perform faithfully all that is due her as a mother's duties to the children of her predecessor. The difficulty in her way is an insurmountable one, and it consists in the want of a mother's instinct toward the children of another. This instinct is the all-the-education in the world, afford but a poor and indifferent substitute for this God-like instinct. The ties which bind a mother's heart are, in their essence, different from those which can ever bind any other to her child.

Nowhere can I give a more striking proof of his wisdom than when he ordered the child to be cut in halves and divided between the two women who claimed it, and the love that this would bring out the true instinct of the heart which, as I said, is God-like in its love. The mother's love, and all mankind for the false woman, though intensely anxious to obtain her child, was willing to see it cut in two rather than to surrender it.

The maternal instinct is equally strong in the lower animals, and it lees intelligent than in the human race, but is wonderfully adapted for the protection of its objects. Birds, in their native state, are timid, become aggressive and fierce toward man, if he disturbs the nests containing their young. But what int, brought up in the country, has not had his fears excited, and his love for the feathered songsters affected a while ago or a broken wing which she had lured him far from the spot where her young treasures were concealed, when she would soar into the air, leaving him to feel like a fool, and to wonder why for the next which he had stumbled over and disturbed?

There is no substitute for the mother—none which makes her place good. When her form fades from the household, a light has gone out which may be attempted, but can not be imitated, but which can never be relumed.

Sunshine in February.

February and March are the two roughest months of the year in the climate of this city. It is not only the bleak, harsh weather which are disagreeable, but dark clouds cover the sky, or drift swiftly athwart it, helping to make what we call bleak weather. The air is the most unfavorable to the complexion, and the face grew dark under the influence of such weather.

With all the unpleasant features of these two frowning months, however, there are some extremely pleasant qualities. The days are growing longer, and the sun is itself, seems always to exert a cheering influence. And as the days grow longer, and the sun's rays fall in a clear, grown warmer. There is a peculiar sunshine in February, which is not known in the other two days of February. It is because at this it would seem right to thrust through the frost that binds up the earth, and the sun's rays convert it, and weaken from their wintry sleep the roots and the buds of the trees.

It penetrates the heart of man, and kindles it anew with love for the Great Source of gratitude to the Creator. Welcome the few but cheering days of sunshine in the changeable and harsh month of February!

Burglaries on the Increase.

Burglaries seem to be the favorite pastime of Westchester county. In Rye, Mamaroneck, Morris Vernon, Yonkers and Westchesterdo robberies are of almost nightly occurrence. How and then as many as four contiguous houses are entered in a night. Not only have they made out silver ware, jewelry and money, but also table-cloths, bedding, wearing apparel, and whatever of value is easily packable. The victimized inhabitants are becoming aroused, and in some places have organized house guards for the purpose of watching for and hunting down the burglars; and the chances are that if any of the villains are caught, they will be accidentally shot in the excitement of the moment.

Be Careful About Anodynes—Another Warning.

We have often cautioned our readers against the danger of administering anodynes to themselves. No one can think of light on the practice with safety. Many physicians have tried it, and have fallen victims to their temerity.

If physicians, skilled in the use of medicines, cannot administer anodynes to themselves safely, how much greater must be the danger to laymen! Many a death has culminated in of this. All will remember the melancholy end of HALPINE, the poet, which occurred at the Astor House a few years ago, from the use of chloroform, to which he was accustomed, but of which he happened to inhale a little too much.

A short time since a young man, formerly an officer in the English army, died in this city, from an overdose of opium. He was troubled by a cough which kept him awake nights. He took a considerable quantity of laudanum, but it did not put him to sleep. He then sent out, late in the evening, for a bottle of Madame's elixir, and having looked at the vials at the wrapper for directions how much to take, he swallowed the whole contents of the phial; and the following morning was found dead in his bed.

No person can depend upon the full possession of his faculties when under the influence of opium. Consequently, as soon as the hour arrives for the administration of the drug, if within his reach, he is liable to take more than is capacitated to judge correctly what is safe, to take, and he does.

Do not take anodynes unless they are prescribed by a physician who knows you, and let them be administered according to the directions which he may bestow upon you, and not otherwise than the one who takes them.

Domestic Misery—A Wife's Appeal.

Much of the mental anguish and bodily physical suffering in this world arises from causes which do not seem to exist from necessity, and for the remedies for which the sufferer in his or her misery is not always easy to prescribe. Many married couples are wretched for the reason which may be stated in the single word, *Misunderstanding*.

We publish below a letter from an unhappy wife. Her heart is breaking, breaking! because the husband upon whom she relies for the cares of her life are not lightened, by an approving smile and a word of encouragement from her husband. One would think that the cause of her unhappiness must be very slight, and that a word would restore love to impatient in her husband's heart the fine instincts of which Nature has left it void. But it is not the simple enough: but it can come only from the sun. Of what use is it to torment the upbraid a stolid man, who looks upon his wife only as he regards a useful beast of burden, and who loves her merely because she is his and bears his children, just as he loves his horses because he owns them? Is there no secret?

But it will be asked, Must the wretchedness of such a wife continue always? We answer, How can it be helped? She has married, and has children, and their companionship will be constantly growing more and more enjoyable. She has the hope of heaven. She has to seek in divorce or separation a refuge from her present troubles, she would but plunge herself into deeper sorrows.

We trust that the publication of this wife, permanently unhappy with a husband whom she does not accuse of any vices, may serve as a warning both to young ladies and young men, not hastily to ally themselves for life to uncongenial spirits.

JANUARY 31, 1872.

MR. BONNER: After reading your paper for more than twelve years, I come to you the first time for your opinion and advice. I am a lady, and am between my husband and myself. We have a family of ten children, the youngest of which is past four months old, and I have to do all my work alone, or with very little help from the children, and no matter how I sew, stand, cook, bake, or wash, my husband finds no end to his complaints and fault-finding. I am not extravagant in my dress, instead of supplying me with the necessaries of life, and the dictates of my profession requires, intrepidation-ments on the most striking ornaments of our dress, he finds fault with every article I wear. "Eyes—dress up a little, eyebrows specially"—"Hair—comb it smooth, and not so much curling"—"divine form! guess not—the gods don't poise ride and elevate remarks offend my natural modesty. I am a lady, and have been all my life, and my husband has no real foundation for what he says but one!

I have a decided idea that the ancients had not our church privileges, I was eager to introduce the Bible as the chief textbook in our public temples—I call them all temples, as being away from dear friends and the home of my childhood. Catching sight of a tin plate nailed to a tree, and upon which was written in large letters, a handsome mansion, with the legend "Engraving on Wood," I was struck with the thought, "Oh, and would hardly be content if I could not have a Bible in every home, and the thought came, "Why, this is the real Christian Science!" and so, why, this is the real barbarism!"

Now, Mr. Bonner, what are your privileges? Mr. Bonner, I could not draw him in. Approchless were the feelings of the stranger at the first appointment. Can I have made a mistake? The Diagram is also sent for one hour, and may name like Diogenes I could have conducted myself. I have been married but little time, and I can appear to know a good deal of everything. Could you not help me with information. Can I have made a mistake?

In Search of a Daughter-in-Law.

A letter from Pekin gives an interesting account of the efforts of the Chinese to find a wife for their Emperor. Couriers were sent out all through the empire to hunt out the most beautiful girls for the Emperor, and they were put on the look-out for the same. The girls are taken to the capital, and there the choice is to be subjected to a rigid scrutiny. The Tycoon of Japan has recently married, and the Emperor of China, it is said, she had not yet found a daughter-in-law to her liking. The young girls are having a hard time of it. One of the most take for his first wife, or rather for wife No. 1, as the Emperor will undoubtedly have another shall choose for that position, and will not be content with a single wife for many days. His other four or five hundred wives will also be provided for by his mother, but when he comes of age he can have all their heads cut off if he only do not suit him, and can commence housekeeping on so entirely new a basis.

The Fastest Time Ever Made—A Mile in 2'16.

The Turf, Field and Farm says:—DEXTER trotted a mile and twenty-seven feet at Buffalo in 2'13¼, and was on Fashion track, Long Island, in 2'16. The latter was not, technically speaking, a "record" mile, as it was trotted in a race, and the account we have in the *Turf, Field and Farm*, as well as the *Herald*, *Tribune*, and all the other daily papers at the time.

A LETTER TO MR. BONNER ON HIS COMING ATTACK OF GOUT.

MY DEAR MR. BONNER: Are you sure that in the circumstances that laid you up? People get fancies into their heads sometimes, and have imaginary pains. Is one likely to have the rheumatism and not know it? What sort of an affection is it? Tell us all about it. Are the sensations pleasing, or otherwise? I inquire, because I may have had it myself, and through ignorance of the symptoms, have, unconscious of it, which is an experience that no intelligent man would choose to have.

A little later—I have found out! You need not trouble yourself to describe it. I congratulate you! Not so much for present benefits, as for good prospects. You are a rising man in the world! Rheumatism is well enough as a beginning. It is, however, democratic. There is no sign of gentility in it. The plainest people have it. A poor man may have the rheumatism as ably as a rich man.

It is not, then, your present enjoyment that leads me to felicitate you. It is the prospect that you will soon have the gout. That will be a distinction indeed! It is not every man capable of possessing it that may aspire to *post*. It is a well-to-do affection, with a dignified bearing. It is hardly more than a testimony of Nature that a man is famous. Chatham had the gout; so had the late Lord Derby; so had Sheridan; so had Canning. Are you quite sure that your late illness was not incipient gout? If you cannot honestly claim that, is there no way of committing? Why not? Why not have the gout, and at once? Who has written on the *Ledger* for so many years would feel so proud if we had a leader printed weekly to have the gout. We would throw an air of respectability over us all.

Quite aside from our enjoyment of your gout, there are many advantages accruing to you. It will give you a lawful liberty of "blowing up" when you feel cross. It will give you all the rights of an arbitrary monarch. It will entitle you to wrathful their exercises. For you to have the softest answer that turneth away wrath. You can have two chairs if you wish, even if others stand. Men will respect you as they used to do when boys, on occasion of stabbing their fellow-schoolmates. When the gout flies to an extra toe, you can roar at your best friend, and he will only look upon you as a martyr to the gout, without any one's having a right to wonder or protest.

Above all, the gout, I believe, is temper. That is not wise or terminable when a man has the gout. But if he be, and can sit down on the possessed leg, he has a perfect right to be cross, and no one can resent even the action with some suitable words. It is a kind of Heaven-sent privilege. Use it well.

While you sit with bandaged feet perched on a stool before you, you receive the homage of your friends with such pleasure as may be allowed to a martyr. Your wife will be "Mrs. Bonner" to you, and not "Nelly" or "Kitty," a little too fast! The fact is, you showed it a little too much yesterday. Another one says,

LOOK AHEAD.

BY CADES DUNN.

Look not back upon the past,
Seize to profit by its teachings;
Yesterprience hold fast,
Only to regard its preachings;
Let the dead bury the many here been,
With that bitterness born of sin.
Yet there's helpfulness for you may win—
Look ahead!

See you ship that cleaves the wave
Strong in the many days before?
Yet she sails on firm and brave,
Though she's seen many a storm like a willow!
Look ahead!

Better far will it that brave
Past by hour, though sometimes they endeavor,
Than the energy that always
And live dumb in sloth forever;
If success may wreath the skies
She became for backward turning.
Then, O friend, whose heart and hand
Keep on heart, and may success attend
And you'll reach the Promised Land—
Look ahead!

FILIPPO, THE BANDIT;

OR, THE

Necromancer of Monte Gargano

By CARLOTTA KINGSLEY,

AUTHOR OF "THE MYSTERY OF NO. 27."

CHAPTER XV.

"'TIL EACH IS A GOD!"

Adrian of Palermo drew wholly upon his imagination when he told the mysterious Francesca that her lover, Angelo Capello, had been thrown into the dungeons of San Germano.

That young nobleman had not reached Foggia, but his arrival was hourly expected, and the Marchesa was prepared, but by whom should he be captured by his cousin was so sincere, that Adrian's own heart was touched by the false tale which so overwhelmed the signorita.

At the very moment when Adrian was bearing his unconscious burden into the Marchesa's castle, bands of men might have been seen approaching the town from different directions.

The first and most noticeable of these two bands was composed of twenty-four horsemen rudely armed, commanded by a tall, well-set young man, who had succeeded in a manner that indicated high rank and lacking of ordinary discipline.

They were led by a young man of a peculiarly graceful and prepossessing appearance. His handsome face was fully revealed in the armor of the lightest steel and finest temper. Over this was a helmet of the same steel lattice, which partially concealed the military adornments of his head.

His countenance was of the most noble and consummate beauty. Every feature was in unison with the light which it reflected from a pure and upright heart, and the smile which occasionally overspread his face by no means veered with his companions, never failed to strengthen his impression that his companions alone always produced.

He rode with the ease and grace of one whose home might almost be said to be the saddle, and his commanding air and tone were so perfectly accord that even the Nobel Governor could not have addressed him save by command.

He was followed by a train of twenty-five or thirty horsemen, and they rode so rapidly as though they were bound upon a mission of more than ordinary importance.

Their grave countenances, compressed lips and straightforward bearing indicated that they had a firm purpose before them, and who or what was capable of accomplishing that purpose at any cost.

The leader of this band was Angelo Capello, and he was returning to Foggia after an absence of many weeks among foreign states, whither, as before stated, he had been dispatched upon momentous official business.

As the town toward which they were hastening came in sight, and the leader of the band their gallantness became less rigid, for the journey had been a long one, and they were nearly overcome with fatigue, the thought which tormented the little band if they remained longer in the open country, was neither few nor insignificant.

"May the shade of evil we may not be too late!" exclaimed a cavalier who rode at Capello's side, "and may you, signor, ride whether or not the colors of Frasco float from the castle!"

"I'll yet be disappointed!" was the reply replied Capello. "But rest assured, if the brave Marchesa lives, His French are not yet masters of Foggia."

But the Marchesa cannot control signification with the whole French army," the other cavalier said.

"I have faith to believe that fortune would be favorable to her, either in strength or strategem, as would keep the enemy at bay for a month or more."

"But our dispatches report a discouraging. It is possible he has given up all hope of succor, and has made the best terms he was able with the enemy."

"I will not believe it," Capello proudly replied. "I know the Marchesa well. He loves his country fondly as he manifests his love, while even a forlorn hope remains.

"She will not yield to the necessities may be, while a prince on still farther."

With that the young nobleman his nearly upon a bridge which spanned a

"Hold, Capello," his companion cried. "Your words are a mystic. I will not demand a bridge but, there are others here than this cannon, and a man can't be sure of us it were best if you could curb your impatience—your fears."

Capello glanced quickly at the speaker, and his face became crimson.

"You have doubted me, Ismail Signor, that love is blind, because I have not spoken or the final hour of attack. But the fair Signorita whom you are so impatient to fall, would be better pleased to have no delay your arrival, than that you should be brought into her presence, or perhaps dying."

The campaign has ever abounded with dangerous risks, and not hesitate to advance a single horseman, though our present numbers are not to be despised.

"Your words are those of good cheer, Signor," replied Capello, raising his hand to the embroidered cap. "But tell me, how did you so truly guess our reason of my impatience to be in Foggia?"

By a feat that never fails. A patriot who has ever the necessary humanity in his nature, and the lover who sighs for his mistress must be possessed of the same, yet an old man, yet I have learned the heart of both country and mistress, and so can tell the signs.

"But your reason is not known," said Capello. "Though the heavens may fall, the love of Bianca Strozzi is mine; even to death she will be true."

"Then who rode at Capello's side, shrugging his shoulders.

Again, I say: I am not an old man, yet I have lived long enough to know that a lover is a lover as long as he is in sight, and that he is away his place is readily filled by another."

"Another insult to the Strozzi and I will unhorse thee!" cried Capello.

"Another time, signor, I whipped Signorina may have played you false; but upon whose love I depended is not so familiar."

"Hot-headed and true-hearted like them all!" said Ismail with his friends.

Then he added aloud:

"I meant no insult to the Strozzi, Capello. "I was but a friend's duty to such thy ardor—and it would have done no harm," he hastily continued, seeing his companion about to speak. "Let us be still true, even as we love her the most that she is so; and if false, the warnings of a friend will be remembered with thankfulness."

"Such friendly warnings have a sting in them that is not easy to bear," was Capello's sullen reply. "Let us wait our guerdon, Ismail; there are already enough divisions in the ranks of the enemy, like-hood remain turning traitor."

He reached out his hand, and the other clasped it warmly.

"I grant you the Signorita is a peerless maid, and I know she is as generous to every other Signorita in the land," Luigi remarked. "Nevertheless—"

Capello quickly interposed.

"Nevertheless we will not continue the subject further," he said. "I would not have you think me jealous, nor my lover that if I had cause for it, I shall find her true."

"Her Marchesa is a scheming jade," was the discourteous and insinuating remark which Luigi next made.

"Well?"

"Well, it is possible she may have handsomer hopes for her fair daughter than the Signorita whom you profess to love."

Capello shrugged his shoulders, and exclaimed impatiently:

"Why are you so wilful, Luigi! Have you not heard me two twice or three dismiss this subject?"

Luigi looked keenly at his companion. A shade of compassion passed over his countenance. Drawing nearer his companion, he said, in a lower tone:

"'Tis true I am wilful in this matter, but 'tis for a kind purpose. Guesswonder, as you soon as the door was closed. "What means this sudden appearance of the lord Capello? And why are you so suspiciously free from injuries?"

"I will reply to your questions as concisely as possible," Adrian slowly answered.

His manner was such a contrast to that of the Marchesa, that it would seem as though his calmness ought to quiet her wrath; but the princess seemed to have a contrary effect. Her fine nostrils dilated, her bosom heaved, and her eyes flashed with indignation.

"Speak, then, and quickly, because, like yourself and the Signora Bianca, I am impatient, and fear the beginning of the fray. Signor Capello arrived at the palazzo a few moments after the attack, attracted by my calls for aid."

"Calls for aid!" echoed the Marchesa contemptuously. "Did it not enter the foolish head that even had we been starving, aid would have been more of a calamity than a benefit? Proceed, and if you aim, and you, by shouting and calling all kinds of things to the scene, have doubtless overturned my well-considered plans. I would that some of thy own potions had been in thy stomach rather than cannot-fodder."

"Softly, Excellenza," said Adrian of Palermo, a little injured by the muttering the words. "Had I not come hither, your fine plans would all have miscarried.

"As they is a better condition now, pray?" demanded the Marchesa, her most cherished hopes in Angelo Capello even before the knew the full extent of his misfortune.

"Since Bianca has met this Capello, and knows of his return, it will be impossible to again extract from her a promise to marry Count Cavel. Are you ignorant of that fact, Signor Adrian?"

"It will be impossible for this reason, Excellenza: the Signorita cannot be found."

"Cannot be found! Where is she? Did I not order her from the salon with the Count and others supposed at the window?"

"Well?"

"She doubtless ran to her own chamber for safety, and there she may be found at the moment."

"You are mistaken, Marchesa. Before I was struck to the ground I saw the Signorita of the band seize the Signorita in his arms. I heard her cry, 'Rescue me from the hands of bride for Gaspard!' and then he leaped from his horse and bore her away."

"Wretch!" cried the Marchesa, springing upon Adrian like an infuriated tigress. "Who have you not told me this before?"

She raised her hand as if she would strike him, and he, looking her unflinchingly in the eye, only said:

"Which would you prefer, Marchesa, that Gaspard, the bandit, should have your daughter, or Angelo Capello?"

The Marchesa sunk to her teeth.

"Speak on, and be quick!" she threw, Gaspard! It can not have been successfully managed with such promptness!"

"So I believed, Excellenza. I too would rather see the Signorita in the possession of any than in Capello's, for I like not the name—it has a deadly sound to me—Gaspard!"

Day had fully dawned when Angelo Capello approached the town, and the sun was high in the heavens when the palazzo he seek was completely surrounded by the enemy.

Adrian of Palermo had not failed to exert the confusion the bandit's raid had created in the household of the Marchesa, and when Capello refused to call Count until assured that the Signorita was safely secured.

Then, having no further excuse for lingering, since the Count Cavel was already in possession with Bianca, he reluctantly took his leave.

Passing through the Count's chamber to the grand portal of the palazzo, he found the Count Cavel in the midst of a group of ladies, the Signorita's presence. He would have retired without disturbing them, but Bianca espied him and he loved as well: the rustle of her garments would have drawn his eyes to her form even had not her voice would have been music in his ears.

"You love is strong, and triumphs over every other," she said, as he drew near. "Adrian of Palermo has told me of your flight, and how upon a steed, he saved you from the hands of the bandit Gaspard, and I am overcome with gratitude to you, and shall ever be devoted to you."

He turn it open, and daylight seemed to flood the entire room.

The four Adrian of Palermo, he whom the Marchesa had left in charge of the castle, and Bianca Strozzi, the Signorita, who was the cause of all the excitement.

Capello took it with a throbbing heart, for the fact that the Count Cavel and the Signorita in the bride of Gaspard, thereafter cast him.

CHAPTER XVI.

GASPARD THE ACCURSED.

Shrinking in the shadow of underbrush, and with his horse concealed by the surrounding trees, the Baron Ludovico lost no time in quitting the scene of the fray with Capello.

Once out of sight of the castle, he took a hasty gauge during the night, though the moon was shining brightly, and urged his steed to a gallop headed instead of at nightfall, and thus the baron's journey was considerably lessened.

"Stayed not for brake, but stepped not for stone," was but few moments before the terrible speed of unwearied limbs.

Though the moon was light borden with the cease of an athlete. As they fled, his comrades were left behind, and the moonlight fell upon his head; but declining each others, and urging his steed to the utmost, he soon reached the spot where he had left his horse, and neither halted for breath or rest until he reached it.

Here he paused, and looked around him for a time the brave lodge that every moment and his comrades, and perhaps life itself.

Friends, safety, and perhaps life itself.

Then, with a sigh of relief, he sprang to his feet, and leaped the intervening space with a single bound.

"We are followed, Gaspard!" the man exclaimed, as he reined in his horse by his side, and directing his attention to the rear of the road they had traversed.

"Who are they?" was the reply.

Looking right saw a number of horsemen issuing from the forest at a gallop.

The chieftain's keen eye identified them.

"Ha, ha, ha!" he cried, as he sprang astride into the friendly shadow of a wooded hillock. "'Tis Capello and his men! Let the speed riders who ordered the town to advance—they will be here in a few moments, and then we can ride for our lives!"

"But the Signorita?" Gaspard cried.

"Is not for them to speak when danger lowers!" was the reply.

"Curses on the Signorita!" Gaspard muttered. "Where is she?"

"She is doubtless safe," was the haughty reply, and forgetting all courtesy, all policy and all kindliness, the Marchesa swept from the room.

Adrian of Palermo met her in the little corridor, and bowed profoundly.

The lady's brow was flushed with excitement, and there was a look of surprise in the softer eye, which boded ill to those who fell under her wrath.

"Why did you command me not to mention the Signorita's name when I recovered consciousness a moment ago?" she demanded, as soon as the door was closed. "What means this sudden appearance of the lord Capello? And why are you so suspiciously free from injuries?"

"I will reply to your questions as concisely as possible," Adrian slowly answered.

His manner was such a contrast to that of the Marchesa, that it would seem as though his calmness ought to quiet her wrath; but the princess seemed to have a contrary effect. Her fine nostrils dilated, her bosom heaved, and her eyes flashed with indignation.

"Speak, then, and quickly, because, like yourself and the Signora Bianca, I am impatient, and fear the beginning of the fray. Signor Capello arrived at the palazzo a few moments after the attack, attracted by my calls for aid."

"Calls for aid!" echoed the Marchesa contemptuously. "Did it not enter the foolish head that even had we been starving, aid would have been more of a calamity than a benefit? Proceed, and if you aim, and you, by shouting and calling all kinds of things to the scene, have doubtless overturned my well-considered plans. I would that some of thy own potions had been in thy stomach rather than cannot-fodder."

"Softly, Excellenza," said Adrian of Palermo, a little injured by the muttering the words. "Had I not come hither, your fine plans would all have miscarried.

"As they is a better condition now, pray?" demanded the Marchesa, her most cherished hopes in Angelo Capello even before the knew the full extent of his misfortune.

"Since Bianca has met this Capello, and knows of his return, it will be impossible to again extract from her a promise to marry Count Cavel. Are you ignorant of that fact, Signor Adrian?"

"It will be impossible for this reason, Excellenza: the Signorita cannot be found."

"Cannot be found! Where is she? Did I not order her from the salon with the Count and others supposed at the window?"

"Well?"

"She doubtless ran to her own chamber for safety, and there she may be found at the moment."

"You are mistaken, Marchesa. Before I was struck to the ground I saw the leader of the band seize the Signorita in his arms. I heard her cry, 'Rescue me from the hands of bride for Gaspard!' and then he leaped from his horse and bore her away."

"Wretch!" cried the Marchesa, springing upon Adrian like an infuriated tigress. "Who have you not told me this before?"

She raised her hand as if she would strike him, and he, looking her unflinchingly in the eye, only said:

"Which would you prefer, Marchesa, that Gaspard, the bandit, should have your daughter, or Angelo Capello?"

The Marchesa sunk to her teeth.

"Speak on, and be quick!" she threw, Gaspard! It can not have been successfully managed with such promptness!"

"So I believed, Excellenza. I too would rather see the Signorita in the possession of any than in Capello's, for I like not the name—it has a deadly sound to me—Gaspard!"

Day had fully dawned when Angelo Capello approached the town, and the sun was high in the heavens when the palazzo he seek was completely surrounded by the enemy.

Adrian of Palermo had not failed to exert the confusion the bandit's raid had created in the household of the Marchesa, and when Capello refused to call Count until assured that the Signorita was safely secured.

Then, having no further excuse for lingering, since the Count Cavel was already in possession with Bianca, he reluctantly took his leave.

Passing through the Count's chamber to the grand portal of the palazzo, he found the Count Cavel in the midst of a group of ladies, the Signorita's presence. He would have retired without disturbing them, but Bianca espied him and he loved as well: the rustle of her garments would have drawn his eyes to her form even had not her voice would have been music in his ears.

"You love is strong, and triumphs over every other," she said, as he drew near. "Adrian of Palermo has told me of your flight, and how upon a steed, he saved you from the hands of the bandit Gaspard, and I am overcome with gratitude to you, and shall ever be devoted to you."

He turn it open, and daylight seemed to flood the entire room.

The four Adrian of Palermo, he whom the Marchesa had left in charge of the castle, and Bianca Strozzi, the Signorita, who was the cause of all the excitement.

Capello took it with a throbbing heart, for the fact that the Count Cavel and the bride of Gaspard, thereafter cast him.

CHAPTER XVI.

GASPARD THE ACCURSED.

Shrinking in the shadow of underbrush, and with his horse concealed by the surrounding trees, the Baron Ludovico lost no time in quitting the scene of the fray with Capello.

Once out of sight of the castle, he took a hasty gauge during the night, though the moon was shining brightly, and urged his steed to a gallop headed instead of at nightfall, and thus the baron's journey was considerably lessened.

"Stayed not for brake, but stepped not for stone," was but few moments before the terrible speed of unwearied limbs.

Though the moon was light borden with the cease of an athlete. As they fled, his comrades were left behind, and the moonlight fell upon his head; but declining each others, and urging his steed to the utmost, he soon reached the spot where he had left his horse, and neither halted for breath or rest until he reached it.

Here he paused, and looked around him for a time the brave lodge that every moment and his comrades, and perhaps life itself.

Friends, safety, and perhaps life itself.

Then, with a sigh of relief, he sprang to his feet, and leaped the intervening space with a single bound.

"We are followed, Gaspard!" the man exclaimed, as he reined in his horse by his side, and directing his attention to the rear of the road they had traversed.

"Who are they?" was the reply.

Looking right saw a number of horsemen issuing from the forest at a gallop.

The chieftain's keen eye identified them.

"Ha, ha, ha!" he cried, as he sprang astride into the friendly shadow of a wooded hillock. "'Tis Capello and his men! Let the speed riders who ordered the town to advance—they will be here in a few moments, and then we can ride for our lives!"

"But the Signorita?" Gaspard cried.

"Is not for them to speak when danger lowers!" was the reply.

"Curses on the Signorita!" Gaspard muttered. "Where is she?"

"She is doubtless safe," was the haughty reply, and forgetting all courtesy, all policy and all kindliness, the Marchesa swept from the room.

Adrian of Palermo met her in the little corridor, and bowed profoundly.

The lady's brow was flushed with excitement, and there was a look of surprise in the softer eye, which boded ill to those who fell under her wrath.

"Why did you command me not to mention the Signorita's name when I recovered consciousness a moment ago?" she demanded, as

THE SIGNORITA BIANCA STROZZI TAKEN PRISONER BY THE BANDITTI.

out upon this wild search. The homes of their riders are not hereabouts, else they would know right well that 'tis useless to follow banditti across the Campagna. Were we so minded, we could lead the fools a fine chase across the country."

He half raised himself, with an eager look toward his pursuers.

"Were we not ourselves so jaded, the chase would be one well worth the having."

"But the girl," remonstrated the outlaw who had before spoken.

"'Twould be no greater matter to carry the girl with these fellows at our back than to do so peaceably," retorted Gaspard.

"Come, my brave fellows," he cried, after a second's reflection, seeming to gain his own consent to a wild project. "Let Foggia ring to-day with our exploits. Up, comrades, and sound our rallying cry."

With the order every bandit sprang to his feet, and the cry, "Revenge upon the Strozzi!" rent the air from the lungs of the six outlaws.

The cry was a challenge for pursuit. The horsemen readily espied the banditti, as they stood for an instant on the verge of the plain to insure their being seen.

They waved their high-crowned hats in wild mockery, and then turning about, dashed in a circuitous route toward the mountains.

Each bandit knew the reason why a more direct route had not been chosen, and ere many seconds elapsed the pursuers knew also.

Gaspard, with the senseless Bianca across his shoulders, ran with the long easy leaps of one well used to mountain routes, and his comrades followed closely at his heels.

"They gain upon us, do they not?" the chieftain asked, stopping a moment to look behind and note the progress of the horsemen.

"Aye, Gaspard, they gain upon us most certainly."

Gaspard suddenly faced his pursuers, and for a rod or two ran directly toward them. Then taking another course, he ran more fleetly still.

A shout from the horsemen fell upon his ears. But a moment after it was uttered, the foremost, who was plunging wildly forward but the second before, was lost to view.

A mocking laugh from the banditti announced the success of Gaspard's ruse.

"Look!" he cried, with a victorious shout. "Another and another have followed the first. That pitfall was nobly planned, and they who now lie floundering at the bottom of it will have reason to curse the hands that made it. Ha! ha! brave *guardiani*, how fares it with thee now?"

Only a moment did either party halt to exchange these mocking courtesies. The remaining horsemen, not waiting to extricate their companions from their unpleasant, and, for aught they knew, perilous position, were rather incited to fresh efforts by this disaster, and plunging their spurs into their horses' flanks, they dashed forward more resolutely than before.

"See!" cried he who now led the party. "That foremost wretch, he who is the chief, carries a burden across his shoulder which to my eyes looks much like a living being. Did not Signor Capello ask about a Signorita yonder in the palazzo?"

"Aye, that he did, in truth, and the Signorita he hoped to see is one whom he loves. If that is she whom yonder wretch is bearing away, we cannot do a nobler deed than to rescue her from his clutches."

"Forward, comrades! in Heaven's name, forward!"

The faithful band needed no urging. Their very steeds seemed to comprehend the urgency of the case, for, rallying their nearly spent strength, they dashed forward as bravely as they were able.

Banditti and horsemen did their best. Each disregarded the drawbacks which fatigue imposed, and the pursuit soon assumed the character of a race for life or death.

The half score horsemen had little to apprehend from the six fatigued bandits in a hand to hand fight. The former had the advantage of numbers and position, for with the latter it was a question of even more than life or death, for if they should be overtaken and captured, their unsuccessful hardihood would make them the laughing stock of every outlaw of the Abruzzo, while, worse than that, their memory would be execrated to remote generations.

Gaspard's courage never flagged; it was as untiring as his strength appeared to be, and he cheered his comrades as lustily and as triumphantly as though his pursuers were not gaining upon him with every leap.

It was at this moment that Bianca, aroused perhaps by the excitement around her, began to show signs of consciousness. She opened her eyes feebly, and when her glance fell upon the fierce face that was so near her own, fear sent the warm blood coursing so quickly through her veins that strength returned.

Again she unclosed her eyes, and memory coming to her aid, she readily comprehended the scene which she beheld. She understood in whose malign power she was; understood the purpose of the horsemen who rode so madly in the rear, and more than all, she fully understood the consequences of a fruitless pursuit.

Raising herself therefore, as far as she was able, in the outlaw's arms, she made desperate efforts to free herself from his hold. With difficulty she released her arms from his embrace; she waved them wildly to cheer the pursuers on, and her loud cries resounded over the plain, and were echoed from the mountain sides.

"Quiet those outcries!" shouted Gaspard, placing his hand roughly over her mouth, and stifling both voice and breath with the brutal pressure.

Bianca's white teeth were instantly buried in the bandit's palm. Desperation, and a mortal terror of an unknown evil, made her reckless of the means she took to free herself.

With a terrible oath, Gaspard tore his hand from her mouth, and, smarting with pain, he struck the maiden so cruel a blow, that again she was bereft of consciousness.

"The jade must learn to hold her peace," he said, with a fierce look at his companions. "And if she understands at the same time that the lesson will be quickly and thoroughly taught, it is all the better. To the mountains, comrades! To the mountains!"

By this time the pursuit had become almost maddening. Pitfalls had been passed; sometimes they were seen in time, and at others they entrapped both horse and rider; mountain streams, flowing peacefully across the plain, were waded and crossed; deep gorges in the mountain side were threaded, and at last the parties entered the gloom of the Abruzzo.

Then the chances for capture changed. The banditti were at home, and the horsemen were obliged to proceed more cautiously. The breath of the horses came almost in groans from their distended nostrils and open mouths, but the riders, eager as ever to overtake and capture the outlaws, or at least to rescue the maiden, though they reeled in their saddles with fatigue, still paused not, but pressed bravely on—pressed on until, in the deepening gloom of the mountains, in the dark glens and wooded ravines, they lost sight of the fugitives—until the sound of their feet upon the rocky road, of their exultant shouts of triumph ceased—until the moment when, looking above their heads, they saw the fierce leader peering over at them from an inaccessible height.

"Go back, you hounds!" he cried. "Go back to Foggia to your fine masters, and tell them what you have done, and what you failed to do!"

Still mocking the baffled soldiers with wild shouts and wilder laughter, he drew nearer the verge of the cliff and raised the senseless Bianca in his arms high above his head.

Laughing still, he shouted to those beneath: "Shall I hurl her down upon you to crush some of your tender heads with the light weight? Do you want a mangled body to carry back with you to yonder town?"

Poising himself more firmly upon his rocky pinnacle, he prepared to execute his terrible threat.

A cry of horror, a plea for mercy, a threat of vengeance, came hoarsely up from below.

It was answered by a peal of laughter yet more horrid and diabolical than any that had grated upon the air.

"Fools!" shrieked Gaspard. "Do you think that thus easily I could be avenged upon the Strozzi? What the Marchese has done to the banditti of the Abruzzo will be returned to him in a greater measure than by hurling a silly girl from a mountain peak. Go tell him that Gaspard claims his daughter for a bride. Bid him remember Filippo and his murdered comrades, and then let him gnash his teeth in hopeless fury, and come out against us with all the *sbirri* and *guardiani* at his command."

"Deliver the girl to us!" cried the horsemen from below. "Deliver her, or you shall rue this day's work!"

Only a mocking laugh echoed the words.

"Revenge is sweet!" the bandit cried.

"Revenge is sweet!" was the response that seemed to come from every side, and looking from peak to peak every rock seemed alive with banditti.

A huge boulder crashing down the mountain gorge reminded the horsemen that their position was no longer a safe one to occupy.

Further pursuit was useless; to attempt it would have been madness; for who could scale those seemingly inaccessible heights except those whose lives had been passed in this spot, and who knew, both by instinct and familiarity, every foothold upon every crag in the range?

Reluctantly, therefore, yet with muttered threats of future vengeance, the band turned their horses' heads toward the open plain; and the banditti, exulting in their triumph, turned back from the verge of the cliffs and took their way to their secret camp.

Seemingly the encampment had not changed one iota in appearance since the departure of Gaspard and his men two nights before. Apparently the same men lay around the many fires which the damp mountain air made necessary; the light flickered and danced upon the same fierce faces, it gleamed upon the same motley assemblages, and guided the steps of the same swarthy desperadoes, as from time to time a belated straggler returned to the camp.

A shout of welcome greeted Gaspard and his men as they entered the amphitheatre, bearing in triumph their senseless booty.

"A Strozzi for Filippo!" Gaspard shouted, tossing, rather than placing the unconscious girl upon the ground. "Comrades, I have secured the prize I sought. I have won a bride from the Marchese, but death has robbed me of his blood and of half my revenge."

A groan of hate echoed the mention of the Marchese's name.

"Yes, death was before me," Gaspard repeated, "but this fair Signorita will make amends for that great loss. Here, Caterina, Maddelena, come hither and attend to the lady's wants."

Several women of even a baser and more depraved aspect than the men came forward at this command, and approaching the Signorita, sullenly prepared to obey.

They lifted the girl's head from the ground, and from a dirty flagon poured between her lips a few drops of some fiery liquid, which accomplished its mission much more speedily than a gentler remedy would have done, for before many moments Bianca opened her eyes.

She unclosed them wearily, and immediately the lids fell heavily down upon the aching eyeballs. A sigh of pain and of despair escaped her lips, for in that one glance she had seen enough to assure her that she was still in the power of wretches more infamous than the inhabitants of Hades.

"Come, come, my pretty *figlia*," said Gaspard, kneeling upon the ground beside her, and taking her chin familiarly in the palm of his hand. "Cheer up, *carissima*, and give your lord a joyful welcome home."

The words, the touch, the bearing of the man stung Bianca as no other insult could. She sprang to her feet like an arrow shot from a bow, and concentrating in a look every emotion of scorn, hatred, and contempt, she exclaimed:

"Touch me again at your peril, wretch! Though I am a defenceless woman, I will not submit to your insults. The rocks will befriend me, and I shrink not to cast myself headlong from their heights, to escape your hated touch. Back, I say!" she cried, as Gaspard walked toward her with a scowling countenance. "Back! or you will see me dead at your feet."

"Spare yourself the trouble of using these threats, Signorita," said the chieftain. "Perchance I will myself hurl you into some deep abyss."

"I know you are never so generous," Bianca retorted. "When was a bandit ever known to grant a captive's prayer? When did a bandit ever give a prisoner the choice between death and dishonor?"

Gaspard again changed his mood.

"Tut, tut, *figlia*," he said. "It is not for thy benefit to anger me. Know that I am chief of this wild horde, and at a nod or beck from me, they will spring to do my bidding. Choose thy words more carefully, Signorita, and the power I wield may be shared by thee also. Is it not a pleasant thing to rule, even though it may be over banditti? Thy mother would not despise the offer. Thou too shalt be obeyed, thy slightest wish shall be obeyed, if thou wilt but accept the honor I would confer on thee. Become the bride of Gaspard, the bandit chief of the Abruzzo, and thy word shall become our law. Yonder stands a man who once took holy orders. He will speedily unite us in marriage. So come, *carissima*, let us make yonder mossy bank a woodland altar, where we may speak our marriage vows."

He essayed to take her hand, but Bianca, in whose ears his every word had rung as an added insult, raised her hand with force and dashed his quickly aside.

"Do not touch me, villain!" she cried. "I will not. I cannot bear such contamination. Let me return whence I came. Why have you brought me here, and why am I thus persecuted?"

Womanly fear overcame womanly indignation, and covering her face with her hands, she turned toward the rocky wall against which she stood, and wept aloud.

"Tears, *cara mia*?" Gaspard said, continuing his ill-timed, offensive declarations. "Tears upon the cheeks of Gaspard's bride? The crystal drops shall not fall upon the senseless earth to be wasted and lost. Love's hot kisses shall dry them away, and love's endearments shall forbid them again to start."

She felt the hateful clasp of the bandit's arm about her waist. She felt his hot breath upon her cheek as he bent to kiss her. A wild, heart-rending shriek rang out upon the still mountain air, and breaking away from the restraining embrace, she dashed through the group around her, and with the speed of the hunted antelope rushed toward the secret opening.

But with a hundred human blood-hounds full upon her track, what could the poor girl do? What could she do but fall, but beat herself cruelly against the rocky earth, and again lie at the mercy of her captors, mute, bleeding, senseless?

[TO BE CONTINUED.]

—"I am glad," said a missionary to an Indian chief, "that you do not drink whiskey; but it grieves me to find that your people use so much of it." "Ah, yes," said the red man, and he fixed an impressive eye upon the preacher, which communicated the reproof before he uttered it, "we Indians *use* a great deal of whiskey, but we do not *make* it."

To boast the good you've done, ne'er seek;
Let him who did receive it, speak.

—Man passes his life in reasoning on the past, in complaining of the present, and in trembling for the future.

TWO FEET.

Six of us—all school-girls—had gone to have our fortunes told. The gipsy shuffled the old pack of cards three times, and I cut it three times in succession. My first card was the ace of hearts, and I was to have a home, a dear and pleasant home.

"You'll marry well and live happy," said she, "but you'll have trouble first; and there's one that lies between light and dark who has the best of hearts for you, but you don't care for him. Like the sun and the flowers, you have him every day, but you'd miss him if he were gone."

She put away the pack, and then looked in a cup, and muttered to herself, her eyes opening wide, as if they were peering down into the bottom of a deep, deep well.

"I see the flowers come four times," she said at last; "and then there's people all dressed, in a beautiful room. It looks like a wedding. I see the bride with her wreath and vail, but she's not with the rest; she's by herself; and there's the handsomest man you ever saw. He walks back and forth in a place alone. There's music too. But, oh, how dark it grows! and I can't see any more. The lights go out all at once, and the people are all still, and the music stops. But that pale-faced girl that came with you"—and the gipsy whispered, as she looked again in the cup—"she'll only see the grass grow three summers, and she'll never marry. Hers was the ten of hearts, the last card in the last row, and she'll never marry."

The woman leaned her head on her hand as she bent over the cup, and she said, "Poor thing! poor thing!" and shook her head sorrowfully.

"What do you see?" I asked.

"Oh, I see *two feet! two feet!*" she replied; and if she had seen a ghost, or looked up at a scaffold, or down into a grave, she could not have seemed more schocked. I did not want to ask anything more, for, in spite of myself, some of the same strange terror crept over me, and I was sorry I had been such a fool as to come—but the girls put me up to it just for once—to have my fortune told.

School-days were soon over, and we all went back to our homes; and the first face I saw out of the car window, as I reached the depot, was John Wilson's. John Wilson had plain eyes, too gray to be called blue, and yet too much blue about them to be called gray. There wasn't a handsome feature in his face, and nothing striking in his form or manner. I had known him ever since his widowed mother came to live in the big brown house on the corner; and some way—I can't tell how it happened—I was never at a party, promenade, or even a prayer-meeting, but John Wilson was there also, and, most always sure to come home with me. But I never thought of making a hero or lover out of John Wilson. The hero of my dreams and fancies was exceedingly tall, looking down protectingly upon my littleness, with speaking eyes, thrilling voice, and distinguished manner.

I had formed, while at boarding-school, an ardent attachment for Mary Livingston Morris, the young lady whom the gipsy called my white-faced friend, and I had kept up for three years a constant correspondence with her. It was three years since we left school, and she had written me that she had met the best man in the world, and had promised to be his wife on the fourth of the coming May, and I must be bride's-maid. I got my costume ready, and prepared to set out. My travelling dress was steel-colored poplin; my hat, gloves, gaiters and sash were steel-colored. There were blue forget-me-nots in the hat, and a blue ribbon bow for the neck. The fit and trimmings of the dress were perfect. I left home in fine spirits. My health, purse and wardrobe were all in satisfactory condition. As John Wilson shook hands and bade me good-bye—somehow John was always the last to say good-bye—he put a little bunch of forget-me-nots in my hand, and said:

"Take care, Miss Alice, and don't let any of those city fellows steal away your heart."

I was to be at Mary's a week before the wedding, as I was her dearest lady friend, and, like myself, Mary had no sister. I had a pleasant seat on the shady side of the car. Hills, rivers, vales, villas and cottages flitted enchantingly by. All the green in the grass, all the blue in the sky seemed freshly burnished up for this one cloudless morning. My spirits were jubilant. No real grief had ever saddened my girlhood, and these visits to Mary were among the brightest parts of my life. I leaned back to catch one more glimpse of a graceful village spire shining through some distant elms, and I remember nothing more till I opened my eyes, as if half awaking out of sleep, and found myself lying on some boards, and bending over me a man with the finest form and rarest face I had ever seen. His eyes and hair were black as night. He was bandaging up my left arm with what seemed to be a pocket handkerchief. My hat was gone, and my dress was badly torn. I could hear the despairing screams and piercing shrieks of the wounded and the dying. Cars and passengers lay there crushed, swimming in blood.

It was strange how through all I had kept John's forget-me-nots crumpled up in my right hand.

It seemed to me, as I lay in that half unconscious state, as if all the people in the world were dying—all but this tall stranger and myself. He had a slight cut on one side of his forehead. My left temple throbbed with pain, and my left side and arm hurt me intensely as I tried to turn over. I saw amid all this wreck and ruin, just a little in front of me, lying by themselves apart, *two feet, two human feet*, and I fainted. When I opened my eyes the tall stranger was bathing my head, but some one had placed some object, some fragment of broken car or window, between me and those feet. I never saw them more—only as I shall always see them in my dreams, until I die.

Though too weak to stir in the midst of all that wreck and agony, I remember seeing the name "Raphael" on the corner of the handkerchief with which my arm was bandaged. Its owner's seat in the car had been just a little behind, and on the opposite side of mine. By some presence of mind or presence of body he had saved me, after his own most miraculous escape. All those seated near us were numbered among the dead. I shiver and tremble as I try to tell the story, and I never want to read or hear of it more.

I was taken to Mary's house. I was kindly nursed and cared for. Mary was not there. She went out, they said, that morning, they supposed to her cousin's up town, where she went almost every week, and often passed a night. Rested and refreshed, I could see her in the morning.

On my table, in the morning, when I awoke, were flowers. An exquisite bouquet of pansies, heliotropes, rosebuds and japonicas. A tall, dark-haired gentleman, Margaret said, had brought them, and they came every day for that week, fresh flowers.

He had saved my life. He had sent me flowers. And he was the handsomest and most attractive man I had ever seen—my ideal real; of course I couldn't help thinking of him.

Mary did not come back. All search, all inquiry, all advertising, did no good. Nobody had seen her. The bridal day came, and no bride. And robe and wreath and vail and jewels were laid sorrowfully aside, with the faint hope of some event yet solving the sad mystery.

Poor Mrs. Morris walked the floor many a long, long night, haunted by visions of suicide or murder, and sometimes in dreams seeing the fair girl back again.

Raphael came home with me. He came often to see me; and one day, under an old elm-tree near the library window, he told me of his great love, and I promised on the fifteenth of the next June to be his wife.

Two months after the accident, I took up an old paper and my eye fell on an article giving an account of that tragedy still so fresh in my mind, and I read these words:

"One of the saddest sights of the wreck was two feet, by themselves apart, small and delicate, and on the bottom of the sole of each stocking was wrought, in crimson embroidery silk, a little star."

I let the paper fall. It all came to me. The mystery was solved. Mary and I were roommates at school, and the laundress was forever bringing us the wrong stockings from the wash. We each purchased a new box of stockings, and I said, as I took them out of the boxes, I'll fix these so that a wayfaring laundress, though a fool, needn't err therein. So I worked in the bottom of each of Mary's stockings a little crimson star, and in my own I made a star in blue.

Mary had probably found my letter in the post-office, and taken a down train to meet mine coming up, and got on at station G, to surprise me, and accompany me to her home.

We reached station G ten minutes before the accident happened, and she had meant, after the train was well started, to hunt me up through the crowded cars, and slip in slily by my side. But for trying to meet me, she might now have been a happy bride. Raphael comforted me, when I almost reproached myself for being the innocent cause of her death, and I think I loved him with a fervor that never could come from love not born of sorrow.

I sent for John Wilson, and I asked him to go and see Mrs. Morris and tell her about the stockings, that the painful suspense might be over. I thought it best she should know the truth, and not be for ever haunting herself with visions of murder and suicide, or tantalized with a vain hope of some time having her lost daughter come back again. I wanted John to go, for some how it always seemed as, if there was anything hard to do, John could do it. John went, and Mrs. Morris told me long afterward, with streaming eyes, that he talked to her like an angel. The next week after he saw Mrs. Morris, I opened a magazine and found on its second page a poem entitled, "Two Feet." It was full of pathos and power; there was true poetic fire, and true heart in it too. I cut it out and pasted it in the blank leaf of my Bible. I read it so many times that I knew it all. Oh, how many times I've cried over it!

The one who wrote that, I said, could make himself for ever famous by his poetry; and if there is any gift God-given, any gift I covet and almost worship, it is true poetic genius. I didn't know it then, but I learned long afterward, that John Wilson wrote that poem. Every day I heard of some secret good of his doing, but I never thought him a genius, never.

The fifteenth of June came, my wedding-day. How pleasant the parlor looked that evening. I wished all my friends to see me married, so I would have an old-fashioned evening wedding. There were flowers on the mantel, flowers in vases under the pictures, flowers in niches and recesses, flowers everywhere. I had a passion for flowers, and my own hands had arranged them all, and the room was like a garden. I stood a moment in the door, to admire the effect once more, and I sighed, as I thought they are all cut like so many victims for my pleasure, and they must all wither, I said, as I went up stairs to be robed for my bridal.

Just as the girls put the last touch to my dress, and were about to place the orange wreath on my head, there came a loud rolling, deafening peal of thunder, with such sharp flashes of lightning that, in my terror, my bridal dress seemed all in a blaze.

Flash after flash lit up the little ormolu clock on the mantel, and I could see the hands point at half-past seven. "It is just the hour precisely, girls; do you see?" I said; "but I'll never be married in a thunder-storm."

We had heard the people in the hall and parlor below talking and moving about, waiting for the bride's appearance. We had rehearsed and planned it all, with the ungloving and putting on the ring, but the storm put all this out of our heads, and it had made a great hush in the crowd below; not a sound could we hear of whisper, footfall, or laugh, through open window or door. Another terrible crash came, and we knew that some object near was struck. It was the old elm-tree by the library window, the tree under which Raphael and I had so often sat, and where he had first told me of his love. But it was shivered from trunk to crown, and lay like a prostrate giant.

As the tree was struck, Ann heard a sobbing and moaning outside, as if some one were in great terror and distress. Ann was always brave and fearless, and she went out in the storm and found on the piazza a woman holding a child about four years old in her lap. The child had been struck by lightning, and the woman was sobbing and moaning, "My child is dead! My child is dead!" My father was a physician. Ann called him, and the child was brought into our little library and laid on the sofa. Over the sofa were two pictures, of the same size and framed alike—photographs—Raphael's and mine. They had been taken only a week, and were very life-like. The lady seemed to see nothing, notice nothing but the child.

The child was not dead. Thanks to my father's skill, it soon revived, opened its eyes, and looked up at the picture of Raphael hanging just over its little head. It stretched out its arms, put up its hands, and cried out earnestly, "Papa! Papa!"

The mother looked up suddenly, and her eyes met the picture—those beautiful eyes of my Raphael's—looking down at her.

"Raphael! Raphael!" she said, and she swooned away.

It took much longer to restore the woman to consciousness than the child. Hers seemed a shock sudden and severe.

The child raised up, and leaning over the unconscious mother, said:

"Wake up, mamma! wake up! See! see! there's papa!"

I heard a well-known step approaching the library door, and I went out to meet him. Another flash of lightning came full upon his face, and the child, who had followed me in terror, clinging to my dress, met the picture's self face to face, and screamed out:

"Papa! papa! come wake up mamma!"

"The child mistakes you for some one she has known," I said, "and the woman too, for she called your name when she saw the picture."

"The woman must be insane," said Raphael, turning pale, and looking exceedingly annoyed. "I will slip away into the parlor, and she will not be disturbed by her insane impressions. I must have my duplicate walking about somewhere. It is not the first time I have been mistaken for somebody else."

I went back, and staid with the woman alone. She seemed distressed for breath, and I unfastened her dress, and there dropped out a little locket, and a note half worn and torn.

I knew the writing too well. The face in the locket was Raphael's. The handwriting of the old note was Raphael's. There were two pictures in the locket. One was the face of the woman on the sofa, pale and motionless; the other Raphael's—*my* Raphael's; and *hers* it seemed—*hers* first! And this was the very hour when, had the storm not come, I should have left my father's house and began my bridal journey—*Raphael's wife!*

There was a slight scar on Raphael's forehead no one but myself had seen. His hair usually fell over it and covered it. And I thought, if this is only some fearful dream after all, and *her* Raphael is not mine, but some one else, this scar may prove it.

As the woman recovered, she said, turning her lustrous eyes full on me:

"Where did you get that picture? Did you buy it? Raphael, my husband, had several taken in Italy and in this country. Five years ago to-night I was married to Raphael," she said, "and they wrote me he was dead—drowned at sea—and I came to this country to find his grave, and then to take my child to her uncle in Virginia, and there die myself. I am so lonely!" she said, and she opened the little locket, which I had taken care to replace in her bosom. "See, this was taken in Italy," she said, "and there is a little scar on his forehead."

And I looked again more carefully at the locket, and I did see the little scar on the forehead.

The woman went on talking in her plaintive way.

"The child, little Louise," she said, "once came near being burned to death, and in saving her life Raphael burned himself, and I wanted the scar to show in the picture, if only just a little."

Just then three loud, successive rings at the door bell startled us both, and I heard a rough voice say:

"You are my prisoner, sir."

Though he persisted in declaring that he was not the person they sought, Raphael was borne away a prisoner for having been implicated in some extensive counterfeiting schemes; so he never made me any explanation.

John Wilson—good, noble fellow—worked hard, and succeeded in getting Raphael free, and himself, wife and child bound for Italy, with the promise that she should never know how Raphael's picture came in my library. Perhaps some strange series of circumstances had made each believe the other dead, until the woman, losing her way, had come to my door that night to be shielded from the storm.

I was ill a long, long time after that; and through all the delirium of fever, these lines in John's poem would haunt my brain:

"On the dark river's radiant shore,
Those beautiful feet we'll see once more;
There, crowned and robed with virgin pride,
We'll find our lost, 'resplendent bride.'"

Another year passed away, and the fifteenth of June came again. I had been out riding, and I came very quietly in through the open hall door and passed into the library, and there, with his back to me, stood John Wilson before my picture. It was very still, and I heard, up from his big manly heart, one great sob, as he said in a low tone:

"Oh, if she could only love me a little!"

Great, noble, wonderful soul! How my heart sobbed back and went out to him, as I stole up behind him and kissed him!

"I do love you, John," I said. "I think I must have loved you always."

And so it happened that I married John; but he never offered himself to me, as the gipsy said. I have a dear and pleasant home, and oh! how I should miss him if he were gone!

Raphael's wife and child were drowned on their way back to Italy; and he enlisted in some foreign war, was wounded, and lived but three weeks after.

THE HELPING HAND.

A LIFE-PICTURE.

BY SYLVANUS COBB, JR.

The story, with its application, so far as the pointing of a moral is concerned, may be an old one. So are the sunshine and the dew-drop old. So is the human heart old; and the pure impulses and affections of to-day had life in the morning of Eden. Pleasant pictures are always pleasant. "A thing of beauty is a joy forever;" and may I not add, that pure joy, springing from the heart, must be forever beautiful. The simple story I have to tell I give only as a pleasant picture. I knew the parties. One of them is living within the sphere of my knowledge still.

Amos Dutton, at the age of nineteen, left his home in Vermont and came to Boston. His parents were both dead, and he had been left penniless; but by hard work, and close application to every chance which he could grasp, he had managed to gain a good common-school education, besides supporting himself, and helping a twin sister. At length his sister married, and he resolved to seek his fortune in the city. He yearned for a broader and better field of action than was open to him in his far-away home, and having obtained recommendations touching his character and habits from two or three prominent men, he set forth.

Never mind the youth's initiatory struggles. A less resolute will might have failed. Business was dull, and good men were being discharged in nearly all the departments of trade. Finally Amos Dutton entered the warehouse of Andrew Sears, on Milk street, and asked for employment. He was willing to perform any labor, no matter how menial, so that it was honorable, and would not debar him from rising by merit.

Mr. Sears liked the appearance of the youth, and he was willing to accept the recommendations at their face value; but he was not in want of help. He had within a week discharged a number of hands.

Dutton took back his commendatory documents, which had by this time become well worn, and having thanked the merchant for his kindness, he turned to depart.

"That lad has the qualities of a gentleman, at all events," said Mr. Sears, to himself, as the applicant's handsome, pleasant face was turned from him.

The entrance to the counting-house was by a narrow court, and as Dutton was passing out he saw a glittering object upon the pavement. He picked it up, and found it to be a bosom-pin—a fine emerald set in gold. He turned back and re-entered the office, and handed the jewel to Mr. Sears, simply remarking that he had found it in the court, and that the owner would be likely to call there in his quest for it. The merchant took the pin, and said he thought he knew to whom it belonged, and he would see that its proper owner regained it. And without waiting for thanks or praise the youth again departed.

Mr. Sears had seen the young man pick up the valuable jewel, and had particularly noted his movements on the occasion. There had been no hesitation—no casting about of the eyes to see if he was observed,—but the instinct seemed to be with him to do right. And the merchant said to himself,—

"The lad is certainly honest."

And after this the merchant put on his hat to go out.

Amos Dutton, on his way down the court, did not find another jewel; but when he reached the street he found a man in trouble. An old Negro, who had been drawing a heavy bale of merchandise upon a hand-cart, had overturned his load, and his strength was not sufficient to replace it. In vain had he tried to lift the ponderous bale back upon his cart, and in vain was he still striving. Men were passing, but none offered to assist him. Dutton saw, and he hastened to the poor Negro's assistance as he would have hastened to assist a brother.

"Hold on," he cheerily cried. "Let me help you, my friend."

The youth was as strong as he was willing, and very soon the heavy bale was in its place, and with profession of thanks the old African went on his way rejoicing.

Mr. Sears had reached the door of his warehouse just in season to witness this scene, and again he spoke with himself:—

"This youth has a strong hand, and a willing one. The time may come when I shall need such. I will secure it now; and I believe the investment will be a good one."

And he called the youth by name, and beckoned him back.

"My boy," said he, with a kindly smile, "I have changed my mind. I will try you. I told you truly when I told you that I did not at present need more help; but I hope I shall need it ere long. I have witnessed that you are truthful and honest, and I have also witnessed that you have a strong and helping hand, and a willing one. Others might have returned the jewel; but few would have risked the grime and the labor of helping that poor Negro with his street-soiled burden."

And Andrew Sears took Amos Dutton into his employ; and his anticipations were more than realized. Not only did the youth prove himself honest in all things, but his helping hand was ever ready when there was possible need.

Years have passed since that time. Andrew Sears has gone beyond the shadowy vale; but Amos Dutton is living yet, doing good with his vast wealth, and honored and beloved by all who know him.

THE THOUGHTFUL SILENCE OF THE FOREST.

BY WILLIAM ROSS WALLACE.

There is an awful stillness in these trees,
Made naked here by Winter's iron hand
In chartered mastery. A shroud of snow
Spreads without pity on the lengths beneath,
And from the far, calm, cloudless blue o'er all,
The great round Moon, queened by the reverent Stars,
Looks down in earnest meditation, while
The silent wood seems wrapped in solemn thought
Over some dreadful, weird old mystery.

O! it is very terrible. A fear
Of something vast but undefined creeps through
The soul's hushed chamber; and to this, if doomed
Long to endure, death, death itself would be
A prayed for bliss.
O for a little sound,
One single breath to break such silence!
Ha!
There is a stir amid the trees. A Breeze
Moves softly his thin fingers over the boughs,
As if in pity, and his glad, sweet song
Frees the grand Forest, white and still and lone,
From his dread musing.
And now grows the song
Yet louder—Wood and Moon and Stars
Are in one great companionship of joy.
The meaning of that musing may not beam
From Time's revealment, but Eternity
Will know, and all the mystery, then plain,
Must make a blessing of the thoughtful Wood.

A DARING GAME;

OR,

Neva's Three Lovers.

By MRS. HARRIET LEWIS,

AUTHOR OF "THE HAMPTON MYSTERY," "THE BAILIFF'S SCHEME," "THE LADY OF KILDARE," "THE OLD LIFE'S SHADOWS," ETC., ETC., ETC.

CHAPTER XVII.

THE YOUNG WIFE'S DESOLATION.

It was indeed poor Lally Bird, the wronged young wife, whom her husband mourned as dead, who, crouching in the shelter of the way-side thicket, stared after Neva Wynde and Rufus Black with eyes full of a burning woe and despair.

"He loves her! he loves her!" the poor young creature moaned, in the utter abandonment of her terrible anguish. "He said her answer meant life and death to him! And I am so soon forgotten? Oh, he never loved me—never—never! And he does love her with all his soul—O Heaven!"

She sank back into the deeper shadow of the thicket, moaning and wringing her hands.

Her hat had fallen off, and her face was upturned to the gray evening sky. That face, still childlike in its outlines and in its innocence, yet sharp of feature, wan, thin and haggard, was full of wild beseeching. The great hungry black eyes were upraised to Heaven in agonized appeal.

How terribly alone in all the wide world she was! Alone and friendless, with no roof to shelter her, no food to break a long fast, no money. She was ragged and forlorn, her feet peeping from their frail coverings, her sharpened elbows protruding through her sleeves. And now her last hope had been dashed from her, and it seemed as if nothing remained to her but to die.

The story of her life from the moment in which she had fled from her dingy lodgings at New Brompton, had been one of bitterness and privation.

When she had escaped from her only shelter, half maddened and wholly despairing, with the voices of Craven Black and Mrs. McKellar yet ringing in her ears, her first impulse had been self-destruction. She had sped along the streets until, by a circuitous route, she had gained the river and a jutting pier, but it was daylight, and people were in waiting for the boats, so her dread purpose was checked, and she wandered on, wild of face and half distraught, keeping the river ever in sight, as if the view of its waters soothed her mad despair.

Wandering aimlessly onward, she passed through foul river streets, where the vile of every sort congregated, but no one spoke to her or molested her. The shield of a watchful Providence interposed between her and all harm. Once or twice some ruffian would have accosted and stayed her, but a glance into her white and rigid face and wild unseeing eyes made him shrink back abashed, and she sped on as if pursued, not knowing the dangers she had escaped.

She grew weary of foot, and to the wildness of her anguish succeeded a merciful apathy, which steeped her senses. The night came on; the gas lamps were lighted in the streets; the warehouses and shops were closed; there were fewer women in the streets; and in happy homes in the suburbs, at the north and south and east and west of the great teeming City, wives and daughters were gathered into pleasant homes. But she had no home, no refuge, no shelter. She had—oh, saddest of words, and saddest of meanings—she had nowhere to go!

And so she plodded on, slowly and wearily now. She had traversed miles since leaving her lodgings, and it seemed as if her march, like that of the fabled Wandering Jew, must be eternal.

At last, still wandering without aim, she staggered through the turn-gate and out upon the Waterloo Bridge, in the wake of a party of returning play-goers. No one noticed her, and she passed half-way over the bridge and sank down upon one of the stone benches, while the party she had followed went on and were soon lost to view in the Waterloo Road.

She was alone on the bridge, in the night and darkness. Below her lay the dark river, with the small steamers puffing and glancing through the gloom with their tiny eyes of fire, and lowering their stack-pipes as they passed under the bridge. A few people stood at the landing below. Somerset House, dark and silent, like some gigantic mausoleum, lay to her left. Along the river banks were the great warehouses, long since closed for the night, and in the distance the dome of St. Paul's reared its head, faint and shadowy, among the deeper shadows.

The glancing lights of the river boats, the lamps at the landing and along the shores looked strangely unreal to Lally's dazed eyes. She crouched in a corner of the seat and peered over the parapet and tried to think, but her brain seemed paralyzed. The only thought that came to her was that she was no wife, that Rufus had abandoned and disowned her, and that he was to marry another.

People crossed the bridge in laughing groups as the Strand theatres and concert-halls closed, but no one paid heed to, even if they saw, the slender, crouching figure with its wild, fearing eyes. Sometimes, for many minutes together, Lally was alone upon that portion of the bridge—alone with her desperate soul and her terrible temptation to end her sorrows in one fatal plunge.

She arose in one of these intervals to her feet upon the bench and leaned over the parapet, a prayer upon her lips that Heaven would forgive the deed she meditated. And as she stood poised for the leap into eternity, there came back to her, though years had passed since she heard it, the voice of her mother, as she had once listened to it, denouncing the self-murderer as one who destroys his soul as well as his body. The remembrance of the words, and the thought of her mother, caused her to drop again into the corner of her bench sobbing, and weeping a storm of tears that saved her reason.

The wild outburst of her anguish had been succeeded by a strange dullness and apathy, when a woman—a mere girl—"bonnetless, and her hair flying,"—as the Blacks had read in the paper—came running upon the bridge, with moans upon her lips. Lally was as pure and innocent as a little child, yet she knew at a glance that this poor creature belonged to that class which is often termed "unfortunate,"—as Heaven knows they are indeed, in every sense of the sad word. This girl came up to the very niche where Lally was hidden, and sprang upon the bench. She gave one wild look over her shoulder, at the officer who pursued her, and then, with the name of some man upon her lips, tossed up her arms, and sprang over the parapet—into eternity!

Lally uttered a cry of horror.

"It might have been me!" was her first thought, and trembling and terrified, she looked over at the whirling figure as it struck heavily upon a passing boat.

And in the same instant Lally's handkerchief, upon which her name was marked, and which she had held in her hand, dropped over the parapet upon the body of the woman. That accident it was that changed poor Lally's destiny. For the poor suicide was she of whose death Rufus Black read in the paper of the following morning, and Lally's handkerchief found upon the water beside the dead girl, gave the impression that the suicide was Lally Bird.

The presence of Lally upon the bridge escaped the notice of the officer, who turned and ran along the bridge to the end, and hurried down to the pier, whither the rescued body of the suicide was being carried.

People began to gather upon the bridge, seeming almost to spring up miraculously, and Lally, fearing questioning, or detention as witness of the suicide, arose and went back by the way she had come, up Wellington street, into the Strand. She was sufficiently herself by this time to know that she must seek shelter for the night; but where could she go? What respectable inn would give shelter to one so forlorn of aspect, so utterly alone, as she? She would be driven forth as something disreputable and unclean, should she demand lodgings at such an inn. She had money in her pocket—the share Rufus had given her of the ten pounds his father had sent him—but she might almost as well have been penniless, since her money could not procure her respectable shelter for the night.

There might be some home for friendly wanderers, some asylum for respectable women, where she could pass the dangerous hours of darkness, but she knew of none. Such asylums are generally for reclaimed women, not for those who have never gone astray. The omnibuses were still running, it not being yet midnight, and Lally being too tired to walk further, signalled an empty one and took her seat in it.

A long ride followed over rough pavements, past dingy rows of shops and houses, past small villas in small gardens, looking like toy establishments, and through a more sparsely settled region. Lally, overcome with fatigue, dozed most of the time, and was rudely awakened from her slumbers by the stopping of the omnibus and the rough voice of the driver bidding her alight.

She got out, feeling quite dazed, and saw that the omnibus had stopped at the end of its route, and that the horses were already unhitched and being led into the stable. She crept away, not knowing where to go, not even knowing where she was.

Plodding on wearily, now and then clinging to some way-side fence or wall for a moment's rest, she came out upon a wide, deserted heath, open to whoever might choose to camp upon it. This was Hampstead Heath. She walked out upon the turf for some distance, and lay down in the shelter of a furze patch, thinking she was going to die. The skies were dark above her, and all around her the black gloom brooded, covering her from the sight of any tramps who might be taking their sleep that summer night upon the same broad common.

And here Lally slept the sleep of utter weariness. She awakened at the dawn of the new day, and started up, with a wild look around her.

There were donkeys of diminutive breed grazing around her, a few tramps rising lazily from the ground, and a score of industrious people, men, women, boys and girls, digging up groundsel, chickweed and other green weeds, to sell in the great city for the sustenance of birds.

Lally wonderingly surveyed this species of industry of which she had not previously suspected the existence, and then hastily took her departure, not even tempted to prolong her stay by the offer of some bread and cheese from an old, blackened chimney-sweep, who had evidently also slept upon the heath.

All thoughts of self-destruction had gone from her mind, and the question as to her future course now presented itself. The school with which she had formerly been connected as music teacher was broken up, and among the few people whom she had known there was one only to whom she was tempted to go in her distress. That one was an old, consumptive woman who had been "wardrobe mistress" at the seminary during Lally's stay there—that is, the old woman had mended and darned the garments of the pupils, and had supported herself on her meagre pay. She lived at Notting Hill, the school having been located in that neighborhood, and Lally knew her address. The old woman had been kind to her, and Lally resolved to seek her.

She walked a portion of the distance, and availed herself of the aid of omnibuses when she could. Yet the morning was well on when the girl climbed the rickety stairs to the garret of her old friend, and timidly knocked for admittance.

The old woman was at home, busy with her needle, and gave Lally admittance. More—when she heard her pitiful story—she gave the girl sympathy and the tenderest kindness. She was very near her grave, and very poor, but she offered Lally a share of her home, and the girl gratefully accepted it. Here she ate breakfast. During the day her old friend borrowed a copy of the morning's paper, as was her daily custom, and Lally read in it the account of the suicide on Waterloo Bridge, her name being given—to her utter amazement—as that of the self-murderess.

Having a conviction that Rufus would see the same notice, as indeed he had done, she visited the coroner's office with a yearning to see her young husband as he should bend over the poor mutilated body believing it to be her own, and to relieve his anguish and remorse. But Rufus came not, and the suicide was buried in a pauper's grave.

Lally went back to the garret at Notting Hill, with a strange gloom on her face, and shared the labors of the old seamstress, gradually assuming the entire support of her friend, as the old woman's strength failed. She did all the sewing her friend—who was now wardrobe mistress at a boys' school—had engaged to do, and nursed her with a daughter's tenderness, actually starving herself to nourish her only friend, watching by day and night at her side, denying herself food, clothes, and needed rest, to take care of the one who had befriended her; but with all her care and kindness the old woman faded day by day, and early in September died, invoking with her last breath blessings on Lally's name.

The few sticks of furniture were sold to give the old woman a decent burial. Lally was out of money—out of everything. The superintendent of the boys' school refused to allow her to continue the duties she had performed in the old woman's name, alleging that she was too young. And as a last blow, she was turned out of her lodgings because of her inability to pay the rent.

At this crisis of her history, when as it seemed only death presented an open door to her, she resolved to go down to Wyndham and look once more on her husband's face.

To think, with our desperate Lally, was to act. She set out to walk to Wyndham, working in the hop-fields for sustenance as she went. Thus she did three full days of work before she arrived near her destination, and she had crept into the way-side thicket to rest before continuing her journey to Wyndham, when she chanced to overhear the conversation between Neva Wynde and Rufus Black.

Her despair, as she listened to the words of her young husband in declaring his love for Neva, may be imagined. She did not dream how bitterly he had mourned for his lost young wife; she did not dream that she was dearer to him still than Neva could ever be. How could she tell, when listening to his passionate vows of love to Miss Wynde, that the young wife who had slept in his bosom was in his thoughts by day and by night, and was regarded by him as a holy, precious memory?

"It's all over!" she sobbed, pressing her face down upon the dewy turf. "I am forgotten—but why should I not be? I never was his wife. He said so himself in his letter to me that I carry still next my heart. Not his wife—but *she* will be! How beautiful she is! How lovely her face was, how clear her voice. She would pity me if she knew, but she is an heiress, I dare say, while I am only the poor outcast Rufus has made me! Oh, Rufus, Rufus!"

She wailed aloud, but she had learned to bear her griefs in silence, and presently she struggled to her feet and walked in the direction in which the heiress and her lover had gone—the same way by which Lally had recently come.

There was no need for her to go to Wyndham now. Her presence there, or her appearance to Rufus, might embarrass his relations to his newer love, and possibly interfere with his marriage. He thought her dead, and had not even come forward to claim the body he supposed to be hers. Ah, yes, she had never been his wife, and she was forgotten. She would never cross his path again.

She staggered wearily along the road, in and out of the beaten foot-path, with the twilight deepening around her, and with a deeper twilight settling down upon her heart and brain. She passed the Hawkhurst park, the picturesque stone lodge guarding the great bronze gates, and here she paused.

The lodge was closed, and a faint light streamed out through the dotted white curtains. Lally crept close to the great gates formed of bronze spears tipped with gilt, like the gates of the Tuileries gardens at Paris, and pressing her face against the cool rods, looked up the avenue.

At the distance of half a mile or more, the great gray stone mansion sat throned upon a broad ridge of land, and lights flared from the wide uncurtained windows far upon the terrace, and the glass dome of flowers was all alight, and the stately old house looked to the homeless wanderer down by the gates like Paradise.

Her eager eyes searched the terrace, and then, inch by inch, the great tree-arched avenue.

Midway up the avenue, walking slowly as lovers walk, she saw her young husband and Neva Wynde. With great jealous eyes she watched their progress through the shadows, and when they paused in the stream of light upon the terrace, and Rufus Black bent low toward the heiress, a great flame leaped into poor Lally's sombre eyes, and she caught her breath sharply.

The heiress and her suitor stood for some moments upon the terrace, unconscious of the eyes upon them. Rufus declined to go into the house that evening, alleging his agitation as an excuse. Neva took her small parcel which he had carried, and he seized her hand, uttering passionate words of love, and begging her to look favorably upon his suit. Then, not waiting for an answer, he pressed her hand to his lips, and dashed down the avenue toward the gates, while Neva entered the house.

And all this the jealous, disowned wife saw, with her face growing death-like, and the flame burning yet more brightly in her sombre eyes.

"She has accepted him," she muttered. "She will not take the week to consider his suit. They are betrothed. I was sure she lived here. Perhaps she owns the place, and he will be its master. They will both be rich and happy and beloved, while I— Ah, how swiftly he comes! He walked like that the night *I* accepted him. But I am not his wife; I never was, even when I thought myself so. He must not see me. No shadow from the past must darken his happy life—his and hers. It is all over—all over—and I shall never see his face again!"

With one last, long, lingering look, and a sob that came from her very soul, she turned and sped down the road like a mad creature—away from Wyndham, and Rufus, and all her hopes—going, ah, where?

And Rufus, with his new love-dream glowing in his soul, came out of the Hawkhurst grounds, and hurried toward his inn, never dreaming how near he had been to his lost wife, nor how surely he had lost her.

CHAPTER XVIII.

ONE OF NEVA'S LOVERS DISPOSED OF.

Upon his return to the Wyndham inn, Rufus Black found his father awaiting him in their private parlor. The elder Black arched his brows inquiringly as his son came in, and Rufus bowed to him gayly, as he said:

"Well, father, you ought to be pleased with me now. I have offered myself to Miss Wynde."

Craven Black started.

"She has accepted you?" he demanded.

"Not yet. She wants to think the matter over, and I have consented to let the thing rest where it is for a week. I take it as a good sign that she did not refuse me at once. Her hesitation implies a regard for me—"

"Or a sense of duty toward some one else," muttered Craven Black. "Curse that letter. If I had seen the girl, I would never have written it."

"What is it you say, father? I did not catch your words?"

"They were not meant for your ears. So, Miss Wynde demands a week in which to consider your offer? It would be proper for you to refrain from going to Hawkhurst to-morrow. I'll explain to her that you remained away from motives of delicacy."

"Which I shall not do," said Rufus doggedly. "I shall go to Hawkhurst to-morrow evening. I will not leave the field clear to Lord Towyn. He's an earl, rich, handsome, and intellectual, the very man to capture a girl's heart, and if I know myself, I am not going to give him a clear field. Why, he loves her better than I do even, and I can only come out ahead of him by dint of sheer persistency. It's a mystery to me how she refrained from saying No to me, when she can have Lord Towyn if she chooses. There is something behind her hesitation—some hidden cause—"

"Which you will do well to let alone," interposed his father. "'Take the goods the gods provide' without questioning."

Rufus was not satisfied, but concluded to act upon this advice.

The next morning Craven Black attired himself with unusual care, and mounted his piebald horse, a new purchase, and set out alone, at a slow canter, for Hawkhurst. He knew that the heiress usually took a morning ride, attended only by her groom, and he knew in what direction these rides usually lay. It was impossible for him to demand a private interview with her at her home without exciting the suspicions and jealousy of Lady Wynde, and he was determined to see the heiress alone, and discover in what estimation she held him. He was also determined not to accept quietly the four thousand a year of the Baronet's widow until he knew, beyond all peradventure, that he could not obtain the seventy thousand per annum of the Baronet's daughter.

He rode up to Hawkhurst lodge, slackening his speed, but not pausing. As it happened, a little boy, a son of the lodge keeper's, was playing in the road, and Craven Black tossed him a sixpence, and demanded if Miss Wynde were out riding, and which way she had gone.

"Dingle Farm way," said the urchin, scrambling in the dust for the shining coin. "She been gone a long time."

"Who is with her?" asked Craven Black.

"Jim, the groom—that be all."

Black put spurs to his horse and dashed on. He knew where the Dingle Farm was, it having been pointed out to him by Lady Wynde, as a portion of the Hawkhurst property. The ride was a favorite one with Neva, being unusually diversified. The road led through the Dingle wood, across a common, and skirted a chalk-pit of unusual size and depth.

Craven Black turned off from the main road into a narrower one that led across the country, and pursued this course until he entered into the cool shadows of the Dingle wood. Still riding briskly, he came out a little later upon the Dingle common, a square mile of unfenced heath, covered with furze bushes. At the further edge of the common was the chalk-pit, now disused. The road ran dangerously near to the precipitous side of the pit, and there was no railing or fence to serve as a safeguard. Beyond the chalk-pit lay the Dingle Farm, a cozy, red brick farm-house, embowered with trees.

The morning was clear and bright, and the sun was shining. As Craven Black emerged from the shadow of the wood he swept a keen glance over the level common, and beheld, a mile or more away, beyond the chalk-pit, but approaching it, the figure of Miss Wynde.

She was superbly mounted upon a thorough-bred horse, and was followed at a little distance by her groom.

Even at that distance, Craven Black noticed how well Neva sat her horse; how erectly she carried her lithe, light figure; how proudly the little head was poised upon her shoulders. She was coming on toward him at a sweeping gait, her long green robe fluttering in the swift breeze she made.

"She will be a wife to be proud of," thought Craven Black, with a strange stirring at his heart. "How fearless she is. One would think she would pass the chalk-pit at a walk, but it is evident she does not intend to."

He dashed on to meet her. Neva saw him coming, recognized him, and the close grasp upon her bridle rein relaxed, and the fierce gallop subsided into a quiet canter.

She was past the chalk-pit when he came up to her, and she bowed to him coldly, but courteously.

"Good-morning, Miss Wynde," said Mr. Black. "You were having a mad ride here. I fairly shuddered when I saw you coming. A single sheer on the part of your horse would have sent you over the precipice."

"Oh, Badjour and I understand each other," said Neva lightly, patting the horse's proudly arched neck. "I never ride a horse, Mr. Black, if I have not confidence in my ability to control him."

"But the road is so narrow and dangerous at this point," said Craven Black, wheeling, and riding slowly at her side.

"You are right, Mr. Black. The road must be fenced in. I will speak to Lord Towyn about it."

"And why not to Sir John Freise or Mr. Atkins, who are equally your guardians?" asked Craven Black, with an attempt at playfulness.

"Because I presume I shall see Lord Towyn first," replied Neva gravely. "What do you say to a race, Mr. Black? I see that you are returning with me."

Craven Black looked over his shoulder. The discreet groom had fallen behind out of ear-shot. Now was the time to make his declaration of love. Such an opportunity might not again occur.

"The truth is, Miss Wynde," he exclaimed, "I came out to meet you. I want to have a quiet talk with you, if you will hear me."

Neva bowed her head gravely, and her reins fell loosely in her gauntleted hand. They were out upon the wide common now, the Dingle Farm behind them, the Dingle wood ahead.

"You may guess the nature of the communication I have to make to you, Miss Wynde," said her elderly lover, with an appearance of agitation, a portion of which was genuine. "That which I have to say would be more fittingly said in some other position perhaps. I should prefer to say it on my knees to you, as the knights made love in olden times."

"Oh!" said Neva. "Hadn't we better move on faster, Mr. Black?"

"Coquettish like all of your sex!" said Craven Black, drawing nearer to her. "You understand my meaning, Neva? You know that I love you—I who never loved before—"

"Surely," cried Neva, with an arch sparkle in her red-brown eyes, "you did not perjure yourself when *you* married the mother of your son?"

Craven Black bit his lips fiercely, but said smilingly:

"That marriage was one of convenience. No love entered into it, on my side, at least. I never loved till I met you, fair Neva. You have younger suitors, but not one among them all who will be to you what I would be—your slave, your minister, your subject."

"And I should want my husband to be my king," murmured Neva softly. "And I would be his queen."

"That arrangement would suit me perfectly," declared Craven Black, feeling a little awkward at his love-making, not altogether sure Neva was not secretly laughing at him, yet eagerly catching at the assistance her words afforded him. "I would be your king, Miss Neva—"

He paused in anger, as the girl's light laugh made music in his ears that he by no means appreciated. His anger deepened, as Neva looked at him with a bright sauciness, a piquant witchery of eyes and mouth.

"You are very kind," the girl laughed, "but I do not think—pardon me, Mr. Black—that you are of the stuff of which kings of the kind I meant are made!"

Craven Black's fair face flushed. He tugged at his light beard with nervous fingers. An angry light glowered in his light eyes.

"I may not know the full meaning of your words, Miss Neva," he said, forcing himself to speak calmly. "A romantic young girl like you is sure to have many fancies which time will prune. A young girl's fancy is like the overflowing of some graceful rose-tree. When time shall have picked off a bud here, a leaf there, or a half-blown rose elsewhere, the remainder of the blossoming will be more perfect. I am no knight of romance, but I am not aware that there is anything ridiculous in my face or figure. Ladies of the world have smiled graciously upon me, and more than one peeress would have taken my name had I but asked her. My heart is fresh and young, full of romantic visions like yours. My love is honest, and a king could offer no better. Miss Wynde, I ask you to be my wife!"

Neva's face was grave now, but the sparkle was still in her eyes, as she said:

"I am sure I beg your pardon, Mr. Black, but I thought you were a suitor of Mrs. Artress. I never had an idea that your visits were directed to me. I am deeply grateful for the honor you have done me—I suppose that is the proper remark to make under the circumstances; the ladies in novels always say it—but I must decline it."

"And why, if I may be allowed to ask?" demanded Craven Black, his face deepening in hue nearly to purple. "Why this insulting refusal of an honest offer of marriage, Miss Wynde?"

Neva regarded her angry suitor with cool gravity.

"I beg your pardon if the manner of my refusal seemed insulting," she said gently, "but the idea seems so singular—so preposterous! At the risk of offending you again, Mr. Black, I must suggest that a union with Mrs. Artress would be more suitable. I am only a girl, and young still, as you know, and it is proper that youth should mate with youth."

"You prefer my son then?"

"To you? I do."

"And you will marry him?"

The lovely face shadowed, but Neva answered quietly:

"Mr. Rufus has asked me that question, sir, and I prefer to have him receive his answer from my lips. Whatever my feelings toward him, I have no indecision in regard to you."

"And you actually and decidedly refuse me?"

"Actually and decidedly, Mr. Black."

"Is there no hope that you may change your mind, Miss Wynde? Will no devotion upon my part affect your resolution?"

"None whatever. I cannot even give your proposal serious consideration, Mr. Black. I am willing to regard you as a friend. As a lover, pardon me, you would be intolerable to me."

Neva spoke with an honest frankness that increased Craven Black's anger. He saw that he had no chance of winning her love or her fortune, and it behooved him not to lose the lesser fortune and lesser charms of her step-mother. He tried to take his failure philosophically, but in refusing his love, Neva had made him her bitter and unscrupulous enemy.

"I accept my defeat, Miss Wynde," he said bitterly, "and resign all my pretensions to your hand. Pardon my folly, and forget it. I hope my son will meet with better success in his suit. And may I ask as a favor that you will keep my proposal secret, not even telling it to your step-mother?"

"I am not in the habit of boasting of such things, even to Lady Wynde," said Neva coldly. "Your proposal, Mr. Black, is already forgotten."

They were in Dingle wood now, and the heiress struck her horse sharply and dashed away at a canter. Craven Black kept pace with her, and at a discreet distance behind followed the liveried groom.

Neither spoke again until they were out of the wood, and had traversed the cross-road and gained the highway. When the gray towers of Hawkhurst loomed up in full view, their speed slackened, and Craven Black said hastily:

"One word, Miss Wynde. I have your solemn promise, have I not, that you will never betray the fact that I have proposed marriage to you?"

Neva bowed haughtily.

"Since you have not confidence in my delicacy," she said, "I will give the promise."

Craven Black's face flushed with something of triumph. He was still smarting with his anger and disappointment, still secretly foaming with a bitter rage, but he desired to show Neva that he was not at all crushed or humiliated.

"Thank you," he said. "I shall rely upon that promise. The truth is, Miss Neva, a betrayal of my secret would cause me serious trouble. Ladies never pardon even a slight and temporary disaffection like mine. I am engaged to be married, and my promised bride is the most exacting of women. She would rage if she knew that I had looked with love upon one so many years her junior."

"Indeed! You will marry Artress then?"

"Artress!" ejaculated Black, in well-counterfeited amazement. "What, marry the companion when I can have the mistress? No, indeed, Miss Neva. I am engaged to Lady Wynde!"

"To Lady Wynde—to my father's widow?"

Black bowed assent.

Neva was astounded. She had been too busy with her friends since her return to Hawkhurst to detect the real object of Craven Black's visits, and both Lady Wynde and Black had conspired to hoodwink her. She had never contemplated the possibility of Lady Wynde marrying for the third time. The idea almost seemed sacrilegious. Her father had seemed to her so grand and noble, so above other men, that she had not deemed it possible for a woman who had once been honored with his love to marry another.

"It is like Marie Louise, who married her chamberlain after having been the wife of Napoleon," she thought. "It is incredible. I refuse to believe it!"

Her incredulity betrayed itself in her face.

"You don't believe it?" said Black, with a mocking smile. "It is true, I assure you. Lady Wynde and I became engaged before your return from school. We are to be married next month. Her trousseau is secretly preparing in London."

His manner convinced Neva that he spoke the truth.

"And so," she said, her lip curling, "when your wedding-day is so near, and the woman you have won is making ready for your marriage, you amuse yourself in talking love to me! And that is your idea of honor, Mr. Black? You are well named. Craven by name, and Craven by nature!"

She inclined her head haughtily and dashed on. Black, choking with rage, hurried in close pursuit. The lodge gates swung open at their approach, and they galloped up the avenue. Lady Wynde came out upon the terrace to meet them. Neva dismounted at the carriage porch, the terrace being only upon one side of the mansion, and with a haughty little bow to Lady Wynde passed into the house.

Black dismounted and gave his horse in charge of the stable lad who had taken in hand the horse of Neva, and then walked toward the open drawing-room window with his betrothed wife.

"What is the matter between you and Neva, Craven?" asked Lady Wynde jealously. "You look as black as a thundercloud, and she looked like an insulted queen. What have you been saying to her?"

"I thought it time to divulge our secret to her, my darling," said Black hypocritically. "Our wedding-day is so near that I deemed it best to inform her. I met her out riding, and seized upon the occasion to declare the truth."

"And what did she say?"

She fairly withered me with her scorn; recommended me to marry Matilda Artress; and seemed to regard my marriage with her father's widow as a species of sacrilege. I hate her!" he hissed between his clenched teeth.

Lady Wynde smiled, well-pleased.

"And so do I," she acknowledged frankly. "But it is for our interest to counterfeit friendship for her. Be patient, Craven. Some day you and I may bring down her haughty pride to the dust."

"Suppose she refuses Rufus?"

"You and I will soon be married, Craven, and in our union is strength. Tell Rufus to write to Neva, delaying her answer to his suit for a month. By that time we shall be married. If she refuses then to accept your son as her husband, we can contrive some way to compel her obedience. I am her step-mother and guardian, and have authority which I shall use if I am pushed to the wall. I promise you, Craven, that we shall secure our ten thousand a year out of Neva's fortune, and that we shall compel the girl to marry your son. Leave it all to me. Only wait and see!"

[TO BE CONTINUED.]

A SUCCESSFUL CONUNDRUM.

"John has never given you a ring?" said Katie's sister to her one day. John was Katie's lover.

"Never," said Katie, with a regretful shake of the head.

"And he never will until you ask him for it," pursued the sister.

"Then I fear I shall never get one."

"Of course you never will. John is too stupid to think of such things; and as you could never pluck up the courage to ask for it, it follows that you will never get it."

This set Katie to thinking, and to what purpose we shall see.

That evening her lover called to see her. He was very proud and very happy, for the beautiful girl by his side had been for several weeks pledged to marry with him as soon as the business could be properly done; and John was a grand good fellow, too, notwithstanding his obliviousness of certain polite matters.

"John," said Katie, at length, looking up with an innocent smile, "do you know what a conundrum is?"

"Why,—it's a kind of puzzle—a riddle," answered John.

"Do you think you could ask me one that I couldn't guess?"

"I don't know. I never thought of such things. Could you ask me one?"

"I could try."

"Well,—try, Katie."

"Then answer this: Why is the letter D like a gold ring?"

John puzzled his brain over the problem for a long time, but was finally forced to give it up.

"I don't know, Katie. Why is it?"

"Because," replied the maiden, with a very soft flush creeping up to her temples, "*We* cannot be *Wed* without it."

In less than a week from that date Katie had her engagement ring. C.

THE NEW YORK LEDGER

STORM-BOUND.

BY RAYMAR D. ENOS.

For days and days the howling blast,
Amid the hemlocks, roared and cast,
Heaped the white drifts, and swiftly massed
With snow the landscape, full in view.
We heard it sound its clarion calls,
And saw it scale the cliffs and walls
Whose counterparts, the mountain halls,
And glens and gorges sweep along.

And yet our time we're hearty hens,
As sound the hearthstones, warm and bright,
We gathered close, and laughed and sang,
And stories told, the day and night.
And when the fire burned low and dim,
A few old ballads, soft and sweet,
While Tom, her lover, rushed to bring
A cushion for his sister Kate.

Then 'round the grandsire, gray with age,
With eager ears, the group we saw,
And listened to some thrilling page
Of history, or poetic lore,
When he had fought the Britishers,
And given the redcoats blow for blow;
Or told his visit to the theatre,
Whose acts had the forests low.

Spoke, too, of when, with Lafayette,
Our country's foes he met, a brave young elf
Who, to rebuild the snow again,
Had clambered to the window shelf.
And then, perhaps—a luxury rare—
Some ghost story we'd hear,
Full of cold thought and chilling fear,
And almost everything but truth.

And love was made, and troth-plight formed,
And warmth was given to head and heart;
And when at last an hour it slumbered,
And the hour drew near when we must part,
We sang the song of "Auld Lang Syne."
For from that farm-house, cosied and old,
We took sweet memories—sweeter yet
Than any tales sung or told.

VERY AMUSING.

BY MARY ELLE DALLAS.

My grandaunt Bergen was a very old lady, with a quirky sort of skin, so extraordinarily wrinkled that it was hard to believe that she had not been born so. She lived in a set of dressers and a trifecta, and kept her own wood and coal, and cooked and other operations of needle and laundry work upon them. She had a very small life assurity, and lived in a small house of ancient architecture, in which the front door opened into the front parlor, and the bed-room stairs ascended from the dining-room; and with her lived a sort of "help" named Peter, who was supposed to have been "very kind to poor Nanny," a daughter who had departed this life some forty years before.

He was, at present, a mysterious, sleepy old person, who took a great deal of snuff and shuffled about in slippers. He had a high opinion of the old lady, and frequently remarked that she was "a smart woman." He was also of opinion that she was rich, and as he was known had never yet done anything for his own support. Whatever the old lady had, in terms, was left to him. It could not have been much.

There was nothing in the house which could have been stolen but six silver tea-spoons, the same number of forks, and a few old-fashioned jewels, left me by my mother, and which I had given to my aunt for safe keeping, and fully resigned in her own mind that the fiercest of them were forever watching the door. Now, the son-in-law was the last protection, consequently we were not surprised one morning to receive the following missive:

"DEAR FRIENDS: Peter has gone away for a few days, leaving only three, so keep the door and don't let him, and little Patty, in the house with me. Send me one of the boys to take care of me. Send Jack; you are always saying that he is so handy about the house, and you can't do without him; but I would not mind some in the house for a Sunday. I don't regard a servant as any protection. Yours affectionately,

A. S. BERGEN.

"P. S.—A desperate looking person is wasting around. I presume I need not fill the order.

"P. S. 2.—Send Jack."

"Do go, Jack," said my mother.

"You do, Jack," said my sisters.

Of course you'll go, Jack," said my father. "In general the ladies is one of our privileges."

"I can't say that I think she needs any protection," said I. "A burglar has only to take a look at her to know that he had better run; there is nothing there to steal, and a lonely old lady with a pistol and a dog would be a fool to carry a burglar off, after one glimpse of her awful ruffled night-cap."

"We must all go, and do," said my mother.

"And my father used to say she was quite a sporting old lady," said I.

"Go, Jack," cried my sisters, in chorus, "and do be amusing."

I have always had the misfortune of being "amusing." I am called "the life of the family." In a large household the different members generally take different rôles.

Thus, Tom is the youth in love with a young lady.

Mary is gentlest comedy in the person of the young lad's wife with a cooking-stove, and I am the humorist, with a delightful knack of fun in effect from the heavy failure in the part of some black sheep of an uncle, who has persuaded his confiding brother-in-law to endorse a note for him.

I am the comedian of the family, so to speak. I fill the salt-cellar with sugar, and the sugar-bowl with salt, and I am the only burglarious whom I am expected to go.

But I am best, perhaps, at disguises, and have called upon my relatives attired as a peddler, a book-agent, a lightning-rod man, and as a beggar. As for properties, I have a red handkerchief after the manner of gin cotton, and giving it to a servant to look, in which process it of course vanished. I don't know of that, because I do not critique. Some celebrated scientific person did it before me; and indeed, succeeded at last in getting a cheese fairly into his, and brought me its fair image in his waistcoat pocket. I have a great confidence left, of course, as an actor, while, declining to remain where the devil got into the pocket handkerchief.

This long preamble is to explain why I was selected to be amusing during my visit to Grandaunt Bergen, and may be some excuse for the part I played on that occasion. I will be brief, I scorched the reader, and talked my banjo with me, proceeded to Aunt Bergen's house, and boldly rejoined the family for me herself.

"Come in," she said. "I'm so glad to see you! Peter isn't a bit of comfort to me. Do you know that I believe that man is deaf? He's always saying he isn't."

"I have a watchman's rattle and a large bell," said Aunt Bergen, "and I am able to up my own room at night, and am also taking care of the house. I have a stout bludgeon in the front door, and lock it myself, as Peter does not; I don't feel safe. I feel better now you have come. Come to my child, and have tea. Oh, I suppose you brought a revolver?"

"Yes, and a burglar-belt. I am sorry to say I answered. "I won't show them to you, because they are under my vest, and I don't like to pull up my trousers."

"Oh!" said Aunt Bergen. "And what's the banjo for?"

"It's a banjo, to amuse you, aunt," said I.

"Ah," said Aunt Bergen doubtfully. "Well, I used to like music. I had a beau once who used to play the flute, and I was very fond of him. Good Grandaunt Bergen cut him out though. I married him."

After tea—which was that weak beverage believed by elderly ladies—I sang to Aunt Bergen, but she did not appreciate the banjo. She called the comic songs low, and I knew no others. I pranced, and she did not guess what I was doing. I offered to do conundrums, and she said to ask mother. I told some anecdotes. Finally, on retiring to bed, she stopped at the door, and emphasizing her remark with nods of her big-bonnet head, uttered this candid observation:

"Then I told me you were very amusing. I must say I don't find you vastly so," said unkind.

Aunt Bergen was eighty years old. Her self-control was not what it might have been, but that is what she said.

Now a fellow who has made a reputation of any kind doesn't want to lose it. I resolved that I would show her that I could be amusing, before I retired.

At breakfast I did my best, with no result. At dinner I was equally unsuccessful. Supper did not seem to be the time when I was wanted. I sat in the parlor, where I had found a casualty of rather late, using the contents of an old cushion. Of this I had made a head and wig. An apron and hat and coat, probably the absent Peter's, completed my disguise. I tucked up my trousers, and hunched my back with more padding from the cushion, and, with a pillow tucked under my coat, presented myself at the door of the dining-room, where Aunt Bergen sat at her solitary tea, cried:

"Old gents for sale? Any old gents?" in my choicest broken German.

On the instant Aunt Bergen turned her head, seized the bell and began to ring it, sprang for safe, and shrieked at the top of her air" voice:

"Burglars! Help! Murder! Thieves! Burglars! Help!"

"It is I—an old clothes man, ma'am," I cried, advancing.

"Murder! Murder! Thieves!" screamed Aunt Bergen. And in rushed Jack, with a poker, and Mary, with a rolling-pin. Now, you will see that Jack was always saying that he is so handy about the house, and would be useful during my visit I would not stand alone in the house for a Sunday. I don't regard a servant as any protection." Jack was always saying that.

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Aunt Bergen was eighty years old. Her self-control was not what it might have been, but that is what she said.

Now a fellow who has made a reputation of any kind doesn't want to lose it. I resolved that I would show her that I could be amusing, before I retired.

At breakfast I did my best, with no result. At dinner I was equally unsuccessful. Supper did not seem to be the time when I was wanted. I sat in the parlor, where I had found a casualty of rather late, using the contents of an old cushion. Of this I had made a head and wig. An apron and hat and coat, probably the absent Peter's, completed my disguise. I tucked up my trousers, and hunched my back with more padding from the cushion, and, with a pillow tucked under my coat, presented myself at the door of the dining-room, where Aunt Bergen sat at her solitary tea, cried:

"Old gents for sale? Any old gents?" in my choicest broken German.

On the instant Aunt Bergen turned her head, seized the bell and began to ring it, sprang for safe, and shrieked at the top of her air" voice:

"Burglars! Help! Murder! Thieves! Burglars! Help!"

"It is I—an old clothes man, ma'am," I cried, advancing.

"Murder! Murder! Thieves!" screamed Aunt Bergen. And in rushed Jack, with a poker, and Mary, with a rolling-pin. Now, you will see that Jack was always saying that he is so handy about the house, and would be useful during my visit I would not stand alone in the house for a Sunday. I don't regard a servant as any protection." Jack was always saying that.

A. S. BERGEN.

"P. S.—A desperate looking person is wasting around. I presume I need not fill the order.

P. S. 2."

"Do go, Jack," said my mother.

"You do, Jack," said my sisters.

Of course you'll go, Jack," said my father. "In general the ladies is one of our privileges."

I can't say that I think she needs any protection," said I. "A burglar has only to take a look at her to know that he had better run; there is nothing there to steal, and a lonely old lady with a pistol and a dog would be a fool to carry a burglar off, after one glimpse of her awful ruffled night-cap."

We must all go, and do," said my mother.

"And my father used to say she was quite a sporting old lady," said I.

"Go, Jack," cried my sisters, in chorus, "and do be amusing."

I have always had the misfortune of being "amusing." I am called "the life of the family." In a large household the different members generally take different rôles.

Thus, Tom is the youth in love with a young lady.

Mary is gentlest comedy in the person of the young lad's wife with a cooking-stove, and I am the humorist, with a delightful knack of fun in effect from the heavy failure in the part of some black sheep of an uncle, who has persuaded his confiding brother-in-law to endorse a note for him.

I am the comedian of the family, so to speak. I fill the salt-cellar with sugar, and the sugar-bowl with salt, and I am the only burglarious whom I am expected to go.

But I am best, perhaps, at disguises, and have called upon my relatives attired as a peddler, a book-agent, a lightning-rod man, and as a beggar. As for properties, I have a red handkerchief after the manner of gin cotton, and giving it to a servant to look, in which process it of course vanished. I don't know of that, because I do not critique. Some celebrated scientific person did it before me; and indeed, succeeded at last in getting a cheese fairly into his, and brought me its fair image in his waistcoat pocket. I have a great confidence left, of course, as an actor, while, declining to remain where the devil got into the pocket handkerchief."

This long preamble is to explain why I was selected to be amusing during my visit to Grandaunt Bergen, and may be some excuse for the part I played on that occasion. I will be brief, I scorched the reader, and talked my banjo with me, proceeded to Aunt Bergen's house, and boldly rejoined the family for me herself.

"Come in," she said. "I'm so glad to see you! Peter isn't a bit of comfort to me. Do you know that I believe that man is deaf? He's always saying he isn't."

I have a watchman's rattle and a large bell," said Aunt Bergen, "and I am able to up my own room at night, and am also taking care of the house. I have a stout bludgeon on the front door, and lock it myself, as Peter does not; I don't feel safe. I feel better now you have come. Come to my child, and have tea. Oh, I suppose you brought a revolver?"

Yes, and a burglar-belt. I am sorry to say I answered. "I won't show them to you, because they are under my vest, and I don't like to pull up my trousers."

"Oh!" said Aunt Bergen. "And what's the banjo for?"

"It's a banjo, to amuse you, aunt," said I.

"Ah," said Aunt Bergen doubtfully. "Well, I used to like music. I had a beau once who used to play the flute, and I was very fond of him. Good Grandaunt Bergen cut him out though. I married him."

After tea—which was that weak beverage believed by elderly ladies—I sang to Aunt Bergen, but she did not appreciate the banjo. She called the comic songs low, and I knew no others. I pranced, and she did not guess what I was doing. I offered to do conundrums, and she said to ask mother. I told some anecdotes. Finally, on retiring to bed, she stopped at the

FIFTEEN O'CLOCK.

We remember a good story which we once heard Dr. Charles Jewett tell in one of his eloquent addresses. At all events, it was good as he told it.

Dr. Jewett and Boutle were on their way home one night from a convivial party, and the latter, which they had drunk the best beer together, and as the beverage on the occasion had been somewhat stronger than Dr. Johnson's tea, their heads were not in a very preponderant condition. In fact, their course was an extremely zigzag and circuitous one. As they staggered onward the bell of a neighboring church started to peal the hour of midnight.

Lumpkin stopped and caught hold of a lamp-post.

"Hole on, ole fellow," he said, to his companion, "le's see what time 'tis."

Boutle also embraced the lamp-post; and they both counted the strokes of the deep-toned bell.

"One—two—three—"

At this point the clock of another church, but down a diverging street, slightly behind the time of its neighbor, commenced the strike; and so nearly did its notes harmonize and blend in with the others that the often-called senses of our two adventurers did not detect the discrepancy.

"Four counted loudly and in unison—"five—six—seven," until, without breaks of time or rhythm the belated clock kept on to finish its work, and the convivial knights kept on counting—

"Eight—nine—ten—"

"Fifteen o'clock!" cried Lumpkin, transferring his grip and embrace to an ash-box. "Here's one of his confounded old Boston customs—fifteen o'clock! Say, Doc, you've been to Boston—what's the matter with Bean Hill? I never before [illegible] fifteen o'clock!"

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SCIENCE.

In a communication to the Royal Physical Society of Edinburgh, Dr. Macdonald, surgeon of the famous Bergerac Pirin Islands, Mr. Robert Brown, and Mr. Alexander Buchan, the meteorologist, have given the results of their examination into the nature of Oceana, and that great antipathy existing between the two continents manifested by Professor Huxley's system was proved antipathetic.

A petition for its invalidation was presented to practical-minded citizens that the death-rate of the Sandwich Islands was greatly increased by the [illegible] of the Oceanic Ocean, and that the [illegible] of the Oceanic Ocean, and that the [illegible] of the Oceanic Ocean, and that